CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

EDITED BY
G. BROMLEY OXNAM

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Contemporary Preaching

A STUDY IN TRENDS

Lectures Delivered before the
Boston University School of Theology
October 13, 14, and 15, 1930

Edited by
G. BROMLEY OXNAM
President of DePauw University

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO

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Printed in the United States of America

To

TULLY CLEON KNOLES

INSPIRING TEACHER, CREATIVE PREACHER
ABLE ADMINISTRATOR

President of the College of the Pacific

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Christianity has been fighting a rear-guard action upon a world-wide scale. Its strategists have ignored a fundamental principle of warfare, namely, the attacker is spiritually superior to the defender. Marshal Foch, who enunciated this principle, insisted that "Victory equals will." Having resolved conquest into a simple equation, he used the equation to solve his problem, and uttered the command, "Strike with a concentrated whole."

Envisioning attack, contemporary preachers have phrased their sermons in defense terminology. Some of them have "dug in" for the winter. Many have failed to recognize that rear-guard actions are as hard to fight as are advance-guard attacks. The morale of the mass is broken in the former. It is maintained in the latter. The rank and file, in retreat, fight a rear-guard action in the psychology of defeat. Advance-guard movements press forward in the psychology of victory.

Is it surprising that H. R. L. Sheppard, in his plea for the recovery of vital Christianity entitled "The Impatience of a Parson," should have argued that "Where the trumpet is expected, the flute will not suffice"? Is his fear that the flute is the predominant instrument in the orchestra of institutional religion grounded in fact?

Certain it is that the flute suggests the ballroom, costly raiment, the minuet. But the trumpet brings forth the battlefield, khaki, and the march. Full many an academic religionist is willing to dance a minuet behind the lines. He is content to issue orders to the men in the trenches, calling upon them to withstand every assault. Sorry indeed is the picture of ecclesiastical leaders who fret over their positions in the grand march and glance into flattering mirrors to adjust their episcopal prerogatives. Equally disconcerting is the accompanying picture of preachers of the rank and file, far from the battle front. They dance to the lovely strains of the minuet. Their dancing partner is Mademoiselle Tactfulness. Together they skillfully dodge the perplexing issues of a society builded too largely upon anti-kingdom principles. Fortunately, there are khaki-clad ecclesiastics in the front lines. There are soldiers of Christ who have heard the bugle call summoning them to advance. They serve in rural church and city pulpit. It is they who are in large measure responsible for the new emphasis revealed in this collection of lectures entitled "Contemporary Preaching, A Study in Trends."

This volume contains the lectures given at the Third Conference on Preaching of the Boston

University School of Theology, October 13-15, 1930. The trumpet note is dominant here. There is clear recognition of the fact that the attacker is spiritually superior to the defender. These lecturers are less interested in sermonic technique than in the strategy of attack. For them it is not so much a matter of determining the proper form for the expository sermon nor the correct statement of the problem-solving discourse. They insist that we do not stand as defenders awaiting the onslaught of materialism and the flank attacks of humanism. They are done with rear-guard actions. They insist upon attacking. This insistence is seen in Doctor Petty's lecture "The Homiletical Mind" and runs throughout the volume to Halford E. Luccock's plea for a "positive thrust."

The lectures reveal a turning movement in preaching. A turning movement upon the battlefield gives evidence of terrible confusion during the course of its execution. But it results in a change of front! The uninformed observer, looking upon this turning movement in preaching, sees naught but the confusion. The man with eyes to see beholds a turning movement, evidenced in this volume, that marks a change of front wherein the lines will be changed from defensive trenches to attacking waves.

G. Bromley Oxnam.

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I

THE HOMILETICAL MIND

CARL WALLACE PETTY

WE hear much these days about different kinds of mind sets. The regal mental pose of our machine-ridden generation is the scientific mind—the mind that is poised and pointed, nonpartisan and honest, as through microscope or telescope, in test tube or crucible it studies, analyzes, and catalogues those particular chunks of reality called facts. It is the mind behind the blue print and the graph, the mind that writes its history in a card file, that glorifies its routine by christening it technique. It has created much of the power that has produced modern civilization. Through the medium of democratized education it has thrust its outlook and point of view on the intelligent minority in America's population, and because of that bit of self-confidence that always goes along with quick and widespread success, it crowds in for most of the spotlight in the present scene of the drama of progress.

The philosophical mind refuses to surrender the entire stage, however. Insisting that its meaning and value are more important than even the fact itself, it looks over quantity with an eye for quality and disturbs the serenity of science by throwing the gauntlet of the "why" into the face of the "how" of things. The teaching mind comes in for its share of modern adulation. From the many books written on the subject it would seem that the particular type of mental complex that is deserving of the designation has not yet been successfully isolated. Some boards of education, ambitious to be concrete and common sense about the problem, have cut the Gordian knot by arbitrarily declaring the teaching mind to be the possession of the person who can write after his name a Ph.D. From protests that arise from many quarters it can be safely affirmed that such a verdict lacks unanimous support. The judicial mind is not to be overlooked. It has no doubt merited the respect in which it is held among us. Yet at times it has appeared to recognize rights more quickly than righteousness, to enter a defense of precedent at the expense of progress and to confuse sanctified custom with moral obligation.

A certain mutual respect for the integrity and prerogatives of these different mind sets prevails among the scientists, philosophers, educationists, and legalists. But when any one of them dares to resort to edification, or becomes evangelistic about his subject, or shows a missionary interest in imparting to the rank and file the results of his investigation and study, immediately he is accused of one of the two cardinal sins of scholarship, popularization or homiletics. The latter is the unpardonable sin. Said a minor scientist of a major colleague after reading an article on spiritual values written by the latter, "He is a great scientist, but he compromises his scientific standing when he turns preacher, for science and homiletics make a very poor mental amalgam."

The homiletical mind! The mind that the more gracious among the experts note with an irritating smile; that brings a lament from the pessimistic pen of a Krutch; and causes the barroom bouncer of criticism, Mr. Mencken, to explode with a vocabulary that iterates and reiterates such scientific terms as "piffle," "hokum," and "buncombe"—after all, what kind of a mind is it?

Whether we evangelical Protestants like to admit it or not, the pulpit still stands at the center of our strategy for winning the world to the discipleship of Jesus. In our generation some strenuous and successful efforts have been put forth to divide the load of responsibility between the teacher and the preacher. Large and finely appointed educational units have been added to the equipment of churches attempting to keep abreast of the best methods of religious work. Much is said about the child-centered program of the church. The standards of teaching in the church schools have been raised, and the elevation was sadly needed. The three catalogued requirements of yesterday's Sunday-school teacher—piety, punctuality, and perseverance—have been greatly augmented. Seminaries and divinity schools have turned out a large army of religious educational experts who are more or less expert, and many and largely attended have been the conferences on the teaching ministry. This emphasis has been both timely and fruitful. But when all is said for and done by the educational prophets that can be said and done, the pulpit, and not the classroom, is still the point of focus in our Protestant tradition. It may be a foolish method for propagating the gospel, but it remains a fatal fact that it is still our most effective way of reaching men. The building up of habit-patterns is an essential task in religion, but the Holy Spirit seems yet to need a voice to cry in the wilderness.

One of the marked and worthy modifications of evangelical Protestantism during these latter years has been the reappraisal and enrichment of its worship content. Sometimes one wonders if there is any relationship between the alleged shrinkage in the size of the pulpit's influence and the heavy emphasis placed upon at least the ritualistic machinery of worship. There has come the recrudescence of the Gothic, that high type of architecture that John Ruskin called "prayer frozen in stone," and Professor Shotwell, of Columbia, affirms is the highest tribute any religion ever paid its God. There is something almost ironical in the sight of the sons and daughters of men and women who looked upon a pipe organ as the devil's calliope and who feared dignity and decorum in the public act of worship to be a survival of the artifices of popery, sitting to-day under Gothic arches, led in their songs of praise by a vested choir and in their prayers by a man in a silk gown. Of course worship is something deeper than the enrichment of the program and paraphernalia of the public church service. These are only means to an end and are not necessarily to be criticized because our human nature has a profound tendency to substitute means for ends. The Quaker in the silence of his meetinghouse breaks through the externalities and avails himself of the power of the unseen realities as readily as the man who achieves spiritual renewal in the most sincerely and wisely articulated worship program. But it is a pronounced step forward when we nonconformists realize that our public services in the past have often been grotesque and sometimes blasphemous, and we give ourselves to study and experimentation in the deeper possibility of worship.

We as Protestants, in spite of our new worship emphasis, will probably always have with us the pulpit showman and ecclesiastical clown. In some of our churches the ushers will continue to pass out apples on Apple Sunday, and in our pulpits an occasional brother will preach on "Singing in the Rain" as he stands under an umbrella. There will remain those of the preaching fraternity who find their highest conception of a prophet of God to be a sort of a Will Rogers who has substituted a white tie and a cutaway coat for the sombrero and the lariat. There seems to be a large portion of the American public that satisfy their dramatic instinct in Charlie Chaplin, their musical craving from the works of Irving Berlin, their political needs from the Hearst newspapers, and their religious urges in pious vaudeville. It may be lamented—in fact, we may be inspired with a holy zeal to correct the condition—but the fact nevertheless remains. These folk must be ministered to. In a criticism of how it is done we can decry methods without impugning motives. To call our ecclesiastical showmen mountebanks seems to me, for one, to elect to occupy a place in the pew of the Pharisees. God no doubt has often to cause the crudities of men, as well as their wrath, to glorify him.

The new sense of the value and dignity of worship among the evangelicals is highly commendable. However, building an open chancel in the meetinghouse, flanking it on one hand with the lectern and the other with the pulpit, placing the communion table in the center of the sanctuary and crowning it with an alabaster cross, for the Protestant Church cannot lessen the importance of prophecy. It will, rather, aggravate the demand for a higher type of pulpit utterance, lest the beauty and solemnity of the background simply accentuate the shallowness and superficiality of the message. The main spring of our tradition is to-day—as it always has been—preaching. The homiletical mind may inspire banter and condemnation from certain of the intellectuals, but with those of us to whom the proclamation of the unsearchable riches of the love of Christ has been intrusted, it is a matter of imperative concern. At a time when the complexity of the religious scene calls for highly specialized types of ministry there is need for insistence on this fact. It is now high time for us to resent the slurs passed upon our calling, to cease apologizing for the type of mind with which we do our work, and give ourselves to making it ever more effective and efficient.

I

It is obvious that the preaching that is to reach our generation must be the honest creation of a prepared mind. Even in the hinterlands of America the old superstition that piety of life and fluency of speech are the only two qualifications necessary in the work of the ministry is passing. A deep personal experience of spiritual realities, it goes without saying, is prerequisite in the life of anyone who would carry the evangel to others. It is almost inconceivable that a person without that would give himself to the difficulties and problems of the ministry of reconciliation when other investments of life on a selfish basis pay so much larger dividends. The last sin of which the modern ministry can be fairly accused is insincerity. What our fathers called a gift of utterance is an asset not to be scoffed at.

But this tough-minded generation to which we preach, enamored of its material prosperity, proud in the power of its machines, with its superstitious belief in redemption by education, and its distaste for all kinds of discipline, is not going to capitulate with a spiritual message that is intellectually bankrupt. It has built a shrine about the interrogation point, and that modern idol is not to be unseated by pelting it with pious platitudes or marching around its walled altar singing gospel hymns. Profound contributions have been made to the spiritual life of America by a few men who missed the opportunities of careful preparation. But these have given themselves diligently to self-culture and have possessed the only substitute known for the discipline of preparation—a touch of genius.

Our seminaries have come in for some criticism in late years concerning the kind of preparation offered students for the ministry. The result of the criticism has been generally a revision of the curricula. To some of us that has seemed peculiar. It has not been the content of theological training that has caused the bother. It hurts no preacher to be able to distinguish between a piel and a hithpael or to make the verbs in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Knowledge concerning the early heresies of the church is useful. I have to confess I have never had a parishioner myself who raised any question about the Hatch-Harnack theory and only a few who knew there was a Deuteronomic problem.

But it does not appear to be the content of theological education that is faulty. It is, rather, the fact that so many students leave their schools with a vast lot of preparation that they do not know what to do with. The diet appears to have been all right, but the metabolic process seems to have broken down. They are in the position in which a young medical man would find himself who, though well instructed in diagnosis, anatomy, and pathology, and owning a fine kit of surgical instruments, should be thrust into surgery with no technique for exploring an abdomen or operating on a mastoid. What a technique is to a surgeon a synthesis is to the preacher. All preparation for the ministry has just one objective. It is to keep God contemporary and discover ways of making him available for the needs of men and society. The weakness of theological education, if weakness it has, is not so much in the content of its curriculum as in its failure to create in the mind of the young preacher that synthesizing process by which what a man knows can be put to work at the task of bringing a world of striving, seeking, suffering, selfish people into touch with the spiritual resources of the universe.

This is not to say the preacher should be a scientist. It is his business to keep abreast with the general movements of science, so as to be able to find his way around in the modern world without bumping his intellectual shins. But he appears ridiculous when he uses his pulpit as a platform where he may perform as an altar boy for the priests of the laboratory. He is not a philosopher. With the trends of philosophic thinking he will seek to keep in touch. Plato, Plotinus, Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, James he will want to know well enough to be able to pull his own weight into the boat of intelligent discussion. The writings of Dewey he will find as interesting as any other type of cryptogram or cross-word puzzle. From any investment of time and study he puts into Whitehead, Hocking, or Wieman he will receive large dividends. But he is not the formulator of a philosophy; he is the herald of an evangel.

A practical psychologist he certainly must be; but as attractive as the new science of psychology is, it is not his field. Surely, he must know what other men have to say about why we behave like this and why we behave like that. He should know the difference between a rationalization and a projection for his own sake, and since he will confront infantile regressions, inferiority complexes, and delusions of grandeur frequently in his parish, he should be able to identify them and be informed as to the best treatments for such conditions that have been evolved. Watson he will find an interesting study in physiology; and if he does not know his Hadfield, then his mental arsenal is not fully equipped. How to spell and pronounce "psychiatry" is essential, but the practice of that art of healing, if he is wise, he will leave in the hands of the experts. He is not a theologian. Taught as he is in the patterns, creeds, dogmas, and formulæ which have been invented at one time or another to give expression to the spiritual discoveries men of different ages have made in their quest of destiny, he remains primarily interested in religion. For the preacher, religion, like a river, sweeps down across the centuries, taking its theological color from the intellectual and social terrain through which it passes. The theologian may analyze, describe, and plumb the river, but to the preacher is assigned the privilege of keeping the water of life available for contemporary spiritual needs.

But let it immediately be added that, paradoxical as it seems, the homiletical mind is a scientific, philosophical, psychological, theological mind, a synthesizing mind with which a man humbled by the imperative and imperial character of his mission and constantly reminded that the heart has its reasons that the mind never knows, struggles through intellectual discipline to become an honest and sympathetic shepherd of the souls of men. The American mind to which he preaches is a complex structure. It is all cluttered up with bits of science, pseudo philosophy, newspaper ethics, broken dreams, high resolves that aborted, memories that bless and memories that bruise. It is captivated by the glamour of our tempting materialism and yet haunted by an almost indefinable fear of present futility and final frustration. And helping to fix the troubled perplexed mind of our day upon Him whom to know aright brings the peace that passeth understanding—that is the creative task of the homiletical mind.

For that task no culture is too fine, no mind too cosmopolitan, no sympathy too deep. No mission in modern life calls for wider knowledge or a keener appreciation of values in so many fields. There is no realm of human activity where ignorance can work such disaster as in the realm of the spiritual. Our generation will not be led spiritually by men it cannot respect intellectually. The man who insists upon his right to preach and who refuses to spend the time and strength necessary for working out a synthesis of modern knowledge sufficient to keep himself from appearing ridiculous in intelligent company is a traitor to his calling. But the homiletic mind is a mind prepared for a purpose. For some the slogan may be truth for truth's sake, or art for art's sake, but for the preacher it is truth, art, goodness, and beauty for life's sake. He is all things to all men that he may win some.

II

The preaching mind in the very nature of the case must be a positive mind. Dr. J. W. Nixon quotes Schackleford, the mountain climber, as saying that anyone who essayed to climb Everest must meet three conditions. He must be physically strong, experienced in mountain climbing, and believe sincerely that the mountain can be scaled. It might be said that the modern preacher must have a strong body, a careful preparation, and an uncompromising confidence that the religion of Jesus is the final answer to the spiritual needs of men. This sounds trite and commonplace, and yet holding such a conviction positively and at the same time maintaining a true Christian spirit is an art that tests the texture of a man's culture and the very fiber of his soul.

It is an art that grows more difficult as our human sympathies widen and our historical horizons expand. Yesterday the religious picture was painted in whites and blacks. There were the true and the false, the good and the bad, the saved and the lost. But to-day a growing sense of relativity has shaded in the grays between the whites and blacks. Viewing the history of our faith in the light of the evolutionary concept, and honestly recognizing the modifying influences that secular institutions, racial customs, and social patterns have exerted upon what yesterday was counted a supernatural revelation—all this has thrown the whole religious scene into a new perspective. In the study of comparative religions the discovery that there is so much good in the worst faiths and so much to be desired in the best of the faithful, has tended to produce a toleration among us that borders on a surrender of the militant attitude of Christianity. One could not imagine Jonathan Edwards referring to even so saintly a character as Gandhi as the greatest Christian of his generation. The missionary program of the church has succeeded so well across its century and a half of history that it is no longer an expedition of evangelism to salvage a few souls from heathenism, but the content of its evangel penetrates the cultural, political, and social institutions of peoples. Such success inevitably means the appearance in the situation of that humbling challenge to a final faith called syncretism. Already it seems safe to prophesy that the impact of Eastern mysticism and culture upon Occidental religion will bring about modifications in Oriental Christianity as profound as did the assimilation of Greek philosophy by primitive theology in the fourth century, or the effect of feudalism upon the ecclesiastical organization of the tenth.

Added to these obvious factors which militate in the modern world against the old positive note that made the preaching of yesterday so powerful and persuading is the reverent agnosticism that every honest mind must maintain toward areas of reality which those prophets believed they had not only explored, but surveyed and occupied. Professor James Hayden Tufts, writing his intellectual appraisal of life for the new book, *Contemporary American Philosophy,* begins, "My generation has seen the passing of systems of thought which had reigned from Augustine. The conception of the world as a kingdom ruled by God, subject to his laws and their penalties, which was undisturbed by the Protestant Reformation, has dissolved. We watch the process, but as yet are scarcely awake to its possible outcome. The sanctions of inherited morality have gone. Principles and standards which have stood for two thousand years are questioned."[1] Professor Tufts was born in 1862. He has truly stated the negative side of the intellectual history of the last generation.

This is not to say that religion has lost its prestige, but it surely has been called upon to narrow its precinct. It no longer speaks with authority in fields where it once held high prerogatives. It no longer can claim to change the world by appealing to the heavens to tamper with the immutable forces of nature. It does not explain the world; it helps men to overcome it. The person who has a pat little explanation for every interrogation raised by the serious adventure of living is suspected of being either a moron or a mountebank. Jesus draws very close to our generation when we find him at thirty-three dying on his cross with the words, "My God, why" upon his lips. There was mystery then for which there was no answer. There has been no answer since. Life, time and again, drives an honest mind to reverent agnosticism.

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[1] The Macmillan Company.

Nevertheless, creative preaching is the product of a positive mind. Experience has taught the pulpit the futility of peddling negations. Dr. Hugh Black used to say to his homiletic classes, "Young gentlemen, consume your smoke in the study." The study of every successful preacher has an active and efficient smoke-consumer. But positive preaching is more than preaching without negations. It is preaching created in the mind and heart of a man who, having considered the many interpretations of reality that have emerged in the race's quest for completion and final fulfillment, sets upon Christ as the way to truth and life. Doctor Rainsford has defined religion as bringing the best you have to the highest you know. The highest the Christian preacher knows is Christ, and to make him available to men is the best he can give to his world. And how to be positive in preaching without being pontifical, determined without being dogmatic, how to be charitable without compromising, and tolerant without trifling, is an art—it is one of the highest arts to the perfection of which a homiletical mind can give itself in our modern day. William James called for a moral equivalent for war. The modern pulpit must work out a Christian equivalent for bigotry. For ours is an enterprise that is defeated before we begin if we emasculate our good news by equivocation and negation.

III

The homiletical mind is a propagandist mind. Before this linking of the word "propagandist" with the art of preaching excites opposition let an illustration define the relationship. A fair and competent judge was recently appraising the pulpit work of two outstanding American preachers. Of one he said, in substance: "He gives a brilliant performance. His sermons are literary gems and his delivery is faultless. But when he is through, that is the end of it. He has a metropolitan pulpit, but he preaches in the suburbs of the big realities. He juggles skillfully with secondary issues. His utterances are interesting but rarely important. You admire what he says and are charmed with the way he says it, but there is no urgency in it." Of the other he continued: "He gives you the impression of careful preparation, but of preparation for an event rather than for a performance. His sermons do not scintillate, but they stab into the heart of things. Preaching with him means wrestling for a half hour with stern reality, asking no quarter nor giving any. When he is through you go out convinced something ought to be done about it and that you are a partner in the responsibility of getting it done.

Preaching is not a performance; it is an event. We preach that something may be done about it. A sense of necessity must haunt the mind of the preacher who is going to transmute a sense of urgency to others. The prophets of the last generation spoke frequently of a passion for souls. They were burdened with a desire to snatch human brands from the burning. They had to throw out a life line, for someone was drifting away. Salvation was an imperative necessity, for to be lost was an awful destiny. The convinced premillenarian in our midst is fired by a conviction of urgency. The white horse and its Rider may appear at any moment on the clouds, the Rider moving to his coronation. Like a thief in the night he may come an unheralded surprise. There is a thrill of doom in the preacher's shout, "Will you be ready when the bridegroom comes?" Absurd as such a message is to many of us and cutting as it does the very nerve of our social conceptions of the teaching of Jesus, nevertheless it stirs people, and intelligent people, primarily because its preachers convey to men a feeling that religion matters profoundly. If there is any temptation to which liberal preaching seems peculiarly susceptible, it is to the tendency to be casual. There is too much of the "Here-is-the-truth attitude—take it or leave it." And no gospel that leaves its preacher cold and casual will ever challenge others.

It is in a growing suspicion on the part of men that, after all, religion is not an urgent matter that preaching comes up against its most difficult resistance to-day. The Christian message is far more apt to be ignored as unimportant than to be combated as nonvalid. Indifference is the most subtle form of opposition. Men may be, as has been so often said, "incurably religious," but a good many moderns think that they are getting over it. Certain of the intelligentsia dismiss it nonchalantly as outworn science, or a mechanism of escape, or the subjective luxury of the mystically minded. The smug and complacent who confuse comfort with culture are very apt to confuse religion with respectability and look upon church membership as just another club responsibility. Enlisting men to join up with a crusade to take the promised land is difficult when they think they are already there.

And yet in a world that has become a neighborhood without becoming a brotherhood, a world alive with bristling bayonets and powder piles; a world in which a crime culture is slowly permeating the lump of society as it penetrates up from the haunts of dope peddler, gunman, and bootlegger into the drawing rooms on the avenues; with a political structure that is subsiding on its moral foundations, with industry to be Christianized, racial hatreds to be ameliorated, social inequalities to be righted, in an economic order where profits are still placed above personality and where machines are oiled, polished, and protected while men are left to drift and die; in such a world there is as imperative a need of God as history perhaps has ever before known. And woe is us if we preach not the gospel.

In the homiletical mind a sense of necessity is undergirded by a psychology of expectancy. The unexpected does happen often in this world. But preaching that is born out of a mind that anticipates no results will be preaching that gets no results. If there is any place for the defeatist, it is not the pulpit. Christianity is an optimistic faith. Its founder proclaimed his victory over the world the night he was betrayed by a trusted friend into the hands of a group of enemies who sent him to the ignominious death of the cross when he was only thirty-three. As he stood before Pilate he answered him never a word, because he knew that nothing he could say would change the immediate situation, while nothing Pilate could say would change the ultimate results. Jesus never expected anything but final victory.

Much of the prevalent indifference to religion can be traced back to the discouraged note in too much of our present-day preaching. If a man tells the world often enough that the church is on the defensive, the world will believe it. What place the church holds in the leadership of to-day depends entirely on one's point of view. It has retired on some sectors of its far-flung front, but it has advanced on others, and an honest appraisal of its position would probably find it as near its objective as it has ever been. It is difficult to understand the minister who writes smart, snappy articles for secular periodicals wisecracking the sanctities of his tradition, sneering at the inferior type of the men who constitute the brotherhood of the ministry, manipulating statistics for the sole purpose of proving by figures that the enterprise to which he has given his oath of allegiance is failing and revealing in the end that he is interpreting his own defeat as a defeat of God. For a man with such convictions to remain in the ministry when real estate, insurance, and the bond business offer legitimate opportunities for making a livelihood, if it is not a form of treason, it is surely a glorious illustration of bad taste. The man who preaches expecting nothing to happen when the part of the world to which he ministers has been exposed to the contagion of the gospel, is not only prostituting his own life and wasting the time of a busy world, but he is breaking down the morale of the spiritual forces of his day.

Expectancy transmutes into reality under the pressure of the preacher's passion for immediacy. Patience can be both a virtue and a vice. It can strengthen the morale of a soul for a long and difficult enterprise or it can show itself in a form of submission that is well-nigh surrender. A preacher needs to have a sense of humor about his own importance. That is probably where old Elijah failed. Under the juniper tree he thought that the end of the world was at hand. He had just won a battle, but he was convinced God was going to lose the war. So came the rebuke of his Lord, "Arise and anoint a new king and ordain a new prophet." The work shall go on. It was a divine purpose the realization of which depended on no one man's career. A preacher needs to have a sense of humor about himself.

But no prophet can afford to have a sense of humor about the imperative importance of his mission. He can never attach too much immediate significance to his gospel. The words upon the lips of the men who have fired the world with a sense of God are the words Now—To-day. They did not need to have a publishing house ask them to contribute to a series of addresses under the title, "If I Had But One Sermon to Preach." They prophesied always as though the burden of destiny was upon their hearts and the hope of men was in their words. Great preaching is born in the mind that believes something ought to be done, that something will be done, that it will be done Now—To-day.

The homiletical mind is no mind to sneer at. It is the mind prepared for and consecrated to the imperial mission of keeping God contemporary and Jesus Christ available for the needs of men and society. It is a mind that has learned the art of being positive without being pontifical, that is, charitable without compromise. It is a mind sobered by a great necessity, sustained by an unclouded expectancy, and fired by an imperative immediacy, all of which roots in the undebatable conviction that the kingdoms of this world should and will become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.

II

THE FULLNESS OF PREACHING

Raymond Calkins

All real preaching has a certain fullness. It has amplitude, background, and limitless reserves. One feels as if the preacher were drawing from deep and apparently inexhaustible resources. He is bringing from the depths and out of a plentiful supply only that which suits his immediate purpose. All preaching that reaches the heart and fructifies the spiritual nature has this richness to it.

By contrast, consider the shallow, superficial preaching, so much of which abounds. One feels as if the preacher had gathered a little loose talk around a subject which itself has no greatness to it. He speaks faultlessly, harmlessly, aimlessly. All that he says may be so, but it does not grip or fasten the attention, makes no form of spiritual appeal, awakens no deep or answering emotion, and leaves the hearers as untouched as it found them. The preaching is all on the surface. There is no richness to it. It has no nourishing qualities. It does not stir or rouse. It is poor spiritual fodder offered to hungry sheep. Many of them do not eat of it at all and it does not nourish those who do. This form of preaching is all too common. It accounts for the lean and starved condition of so many churchgoing Christians. To it must be ascribed the sterility of the life of the church: its lack of spiritual idealism, its want of aggressiveness and moral power. The church can thrive only under preaching that has fullness to it and depth and moral reach and passion.

Consider the Bible preachers. What fullness is there. You feel that these men were speaking because their souls overflowed. Here was no concocting a discourse: getting up something to say, fashioning a reputable sermon for a Sunday service. Here were men from Moses to Paul into whom God had poured and was continuing to pour a steady stream of his own abundant life; and when they opened their mouths they uttered out of this abundance what had wealth and fullness to it and was calculated to rouse and nourish the lives of those to whom they spoke. Turn to the seventh chapter of Jeremiah and read the sermon that the prophet preached. See what there was in it and behind it. In the first place, there was his own perception, his profound conviction of what real religion is: the meeting and the mingling of the soul of man with the soul of God. To know God and to do his will—this from personal experience the prophet knew real religion to be. Then there was background. He had greeted with enthusiasm the reform of Josiah by which the iniquitous community altars and sacrifices had been abolished and the worship had been centralized at Jerusalem under rules which outlawed the idolatrous practices of the semipagan sanctuaries. But then he had watched and seen and noted how the people substituted sacrifice for ethics, worship for morality. He saw men leading avaricious, dishonest, licentious, cruel lives and then punctiliously performing the Temple rites in the notion that this was worshiping Jehovah. And the indignation of the prophet mounted. Yet he waited. He waited till he could wait no longer. Then when he spoke, he uttered words that have continued to reverberate all down the centuries so that no one can read them to-day without feeling their tremendous force and meaning.

Or take a sermon of Ezekiel, that rare and delicate soul, both priest and mystic, at once seer and ecclesiastic, and see what fullness is there. He broods, he meditates, he waits until truth has come home to him with the clarity of noonday. Then when he speaks, there is reality which cannot be doubted, so self-evident that men wondered that they had not seen it of themselves. It is thus that Ezekiel brushes to one side as if it were made of gossamer the age-long idea that had hardened into adamant that iniquity, like disease, could be inherited, so that a son was guilty because of the sin of his fathers. With what fullness and richness of moral vision and perception Ezekiel disposes of this traditional belief, ignoring and defying what was supposed to be an impregnable dogma of the race, and announces a theory of moral responsibility which arises high and serene above the popular ideas and ever since has clarified for the conscience this obscure and difficult moral problem! And what richness there is in that detailed vision of the idealized Temple out of which there flow the rivers that irrigate and beautify the land and the people that inhabit it!—an ideal never realized in the Temple of Zerubbabel nor in any Temple since reared by man, but presenting the towering outlines of a cathedral finer, more symmetrical and more ornate than the stately minster of Chartres or Bruges or Canterbury.

The Christian preaching has had even greater fullness and depth in proportion to the fuller revelation of the life of God in Christ. What amplitude there is in the preaching of Paul! He can never begin to tell of the wealth of Christian knowledge and life. "Oh the depth," he cries, "of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" And when he preaches, there is richness and mellowness, there is flavor and there is beauty: the truth is brought up out of the depths, and it overruns all the daily life of men, penetrating into their most detailed activities, showing them how to be kind and patient and hospitable and industrious and forgiving—a fullness of preaching which reaches the whole area of human relationships and beautifies as with a stream the entire sphere of life and conduct.

Such is Christian preaching down to our own day. Real preaching always comes from the depths, and then spreads itself over the whole map of human activity. You cannot point to a preacher who has impressed his hearers, whose preaching has not had this fullness and richness as its central characteristic. I recall a sermon of Joseph Parker—and I have not tried to identify it, I am simply trying to reproduce to you the impression which it made on me—preached on an anniversary occasion at City Temple. When I laid it down, I said, "What fullness is there, what wealth and depth!" That wealth was of all kinds. There was wealth of recollection, tender memories, sacred events in the course of a long and fruitful ministry. There was wealth of observation, knowledge of life, appreciation of human nature in its joys and sorrows, its splendid possibilities and its tragic failures. There was wealth of Bible truth. For when he came to expound a passage from the Gospels which to the ordinary reader or student might seem to contain little spiritual food, how his insight and imagination got beneath the surface and brought rich things out of the treasury of God! There was preaching—Christian preaching which had great fullness to it. Not a man or a woman in City Temple that day who must not have been touched and moved by it. If the reading of it seemed to cause a full stream of Christian feeling to penetrate my nature and enrich my mind and heart, what, I asked, must have been the effect of the presence and voice of the man on those who saw and heard him preach?

It is possible that some to whom I am speaking to-day may say, here is an ideal which is too lofty, too exacting for the average preacher to seek to emulate. This fullness of preaching may do for prophets and for exceptional preachers, but it cannot be expected of the run of them. On the contrary, I am insisting on a characteristic of preaching, without which preaching loses its essential quality, a quality which differentiates it from every other form of human address. Undoubtedly it is true that this richness gains in depth and breadth as the preacher's life and ministry grow and expand. This is so true that the common demand of the churches for youthful ministers is terribly shortsighted. The notion that a church can be built up by a spruce young man who has a prepossessing appearance, a good flow of language, administrative ability, and social gifts is one of those ideas which are steadily undermining the stability and permanence and usefulness of the Church of Jesus Christ. Unquestionably with age there comes, or should come, added fullness and wealth to preaching which is calculated to fructify and nourish the spiritual lives of the people. Still, this quality must be there from the first, steadily gaining in dimension and reach. For this fullness of which I am speaking is just what Saint Paul calls it—the fullness of the riches of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And of that fullness every man who calls himself a preacher must have had a taste from the beginning. It must have been made clear to him that there had been somehow opened between him and God a channel through which were flowing riches which he felt called to dispense to the souls of men. If he has never had any such conviction, then he has never had any real calling to be a preacher. The curse of the church is that it has too many men in the pulpit who do not know, never have known, never will know, what it is to preach. They are good men, godly men, consecrated men. Doubtless they have been called to separate themselves from other pursuits to Christian forms of service. As directors of religious education, in varied forms of what is known as social service, as church assistants and administrators they can perform useful and conspicuously successful work. But they simply are not and never will be preachers. For to be a preacher there is necessary to-day as truly as in the days of the prophets of old the consciousness that God is forever telling the one who is to preach something of the richness of his glory. To hear this, to be mindful of it, to be troubled by it, and then to open their mouths and seek to stammer it—this is preaching; and from the beginning there is a quality to it which can only be described as wealth, spiritual wealth. And as the preacher continues to live and to listen and to minister and to walk with men in every vicissitude of experience, there gathers day by day and year by year added richness to what he has to communicate of the life of God in Christ, to the needs of men.

Of what is this fullness compounded? What are its elements? From what quarters of the universe are these rich and rare ingredients brought together which make up that fullness without which preaching loses its power and even its meaning? I mentioned some of them in speaking a moment ago of the preaching of Joseph Parker. You will find them just as plentiful in the sermons of Spurgeon, Brooks, Beecher, or George A. Gordon. I find them in the sermons of unknown preachers, preachers unknown except to the grateful congregations to which they minister. Where I do not find them, there, for me at least, there has been no preaching, no real sermon. I try not to listen when I perceive no rich fullness of the kind I have been trying to describe, in what the speaker has to say. I do not care for orations, rhetoric, literary essays, stump speaking, and the like in the pulpit. It may interest or amuse others, or cause them to admire the fluency or the wit of the speaker. It leaves me cold, or, rather, it makes me hot. It savors of sacrilege. It is substituting the meretricious art of one trying to interest, to entertain, to hold and to amuse an audience, for the sacred, beautiful Christian calling of communicating the riches of the Christian revelation of God to the heart of man. That, and that alone, is preaching. And when I listen to it, I hear the different chords that are brought together and united harmoniously in the utterance of the preacher.

There is broad, fine, acute observation drawn from all parts of the preacher's experience. The great advantage of travel to the preacher is that it gives him this added range of observation and enables him to draw from a broad area of human life the illustrations suited to his purpose. But even if this be denied him, he can train himself to discover in the daily objects that are brought before him material just suited to his use. Hardly a sermon of really great preachers (Phillips Brooks is a conspicuous exception) that does not contain some homely illustration of this kind for the elucidation of spiritual truth.

The gathering together of such material and its use in illustration of spiritual truth is one of the elements of richness in preaching.

Another ingredient of richness in preaching is reading. The preacher is a constant, careful, and broad reader. His reading will be much broader than the books relating to his profession. In the secular press, in novels, in poetry and biography, he will constantly find the food which will enrich his mind. He will read all kinds of heretical literature and be acquainted with every kind of radical moral and scientific and philosophical theory. And his hearers will note that he is not unaware of the battering-rams that have been leveled at the walls of Zion. Yet all his reading is background only. In the best preaching you find little of direct quotation. Real sermons are not filled with literary allusion. You are aware from what the man says and from the way he says it that he is broadly read. All of this makes up a certain richness, creates a broad and secure impression of competency, but is not used in direct quotation to interrupt or to interfere with the man's own free spontaneous utterance. Real preaching is not rich in quotation: it issues from a mind enriched by a knowledge of the best that has been said and thought in the world.

A central ingredient of the fullness of preaching is an intimate knowledge of the Bible. Christian preaching draws its riches out of Scripture. There is no fullness to preaching that is not filled with Bible truth, Bible language, Bible method. Indeed, preaching may be described as the reproduction of the unique message of the Bible in the thought-forms of the modern world. Hence a preacher who is trained in all other ways, who understands philosophy, science, and sociology, but who has lost touch with, has become a stranger to, has grown away from the intimate, deep, and unique message of the Bible to the human soul, can never have any richness, fullness, or depth to his preaching. There is no artificial, merely traditional or accidental connection between intimate knowledge of the Bible and real Christian preaching. This relation is organic and vital. It springs out of the fundamental fact that there is more of God in the Bible than in any other book that ever was written: that the Bible contains the gradual and at last the complete revelation of God in his redemptive love for all mankind. And since the human heart knows no rest except it rest in him, the bringing of this message in Bible language never fails to win the response from the human soul. There is always this richness, this fullness to preaching when that preaching is drawn from Bible sources. Thus secular preaching, preaching that is drawn from other literature and is not penetrated by the peculiar grace of the Bible message—such preaching may be intellectually brilliant, it may win admiration for intellectual gifts, but it lacks the rich evangelical flavor which is of the very essence of true Christian preaching. It fails to communicate the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. It lacks the reach, the depth, the divine appeal of the Bible message. Hence the true preacher is steeped in Bible truth, his mind and nature are saturated by the Bible ideas, his very vocabulary is shaped and tinged by Bible language. There are fullness and richness to his preaching because he is in the Bible mood and within the sphere of the great ruling ideas of the Bible message.

This brings us to the last element of the fullness of preaching. The man who has been mastered by the Bible is himself a converted man. That is, he knows in his own experience the Reality of which he speaks. Always at the center and bottom of his preaching there is a vivid perception of the saving power of the love of God in Jesus Christ. His hearers are aware that the supreme object of the preacher is to convince them that there is such a Reality, that salvation, salvation from every manner of circumstance and of evil, salvation from self, and from the death of all that is best in man, is to be found when once the soul perceives, discovers, and receives that divine Power and allows it to operate and to control his life. It is not too much to say that many preachers are not converted men in this sense of the term. They would not be able to say with Peter, "There is no other name under heaven whereby we may be saved." The uniqueness of the Christian evangel and its solitary power to save the human soul has ceased to be for them an overmastering conviction. Their minds have been attracted in other directions. They have listened to other and more modern voices. They are pointing to other ways of escape and are echoing the theories and ideas of other teachers and of other masters than the Man of Nazareth. Hence there is a certain vagueness, a certain lack of positive Christian appeal. Because the preacher himself has not been convinced and humbled, persuaded and subdued, filled and overwhelmed by the message of redemption, there is and can be no fullness, no evangelical power or appeal to his preaching. You cannot put your finger on a real preacher without discovering that at the center of his preaching there have been this fullness and richness in his own personal experience of the gospel.

Such then, as well as we can analyze them, are the component parts of the fullness of preaching. To state them in the reverse order: there is the fullness of the spiritual experience of the preacher; there is the full, intimate knowledge of Scripture; there is a full, broad knowledge of the ways of the mind of man, obtained through constant inclusive reading; and there is a richness of observation and illustration drawn from a sensitive acquaintance with nature and from intimate association with men in every form of human experience. Such is the fullness of preaching. Note real preachers and see how these elements conspire and combine to make up the richness of what they give in their preaching.

It only remains to suggest how this fullness can be imparted to the sermons which, week after week, the preacher must prepare and deliver. How can each separate sermon in such a case suggest that abundance, these reserves, those boundless resources, which make up the fullness of preaching? Must not the stream sometimes flow dry? Must not the hearers sometimes be able to see bottom? Must it not be evident at last that the preacher is aground if not stranded?

The solution of this evident difficulty lies in giving sermons time to mature, to let them alone until they have ripened and grown into fullness. No one would care to pick green fruit in his orchard, yet this is precisely what many preachers do. They preach sermons that have not had time to grow, to develop, to gather richness, to become mellow, and filled with flavor and beauty. Henry Ward Beecher once described his method of sermon preparation. He said that early in the week he would walk out into his homiletical garden and look the fruit over. When he found a bit of fruit that looked just a bit riper than the rest, he would choose it and take it down. That was his sermon. There were many others, but they had not grown into their fullness. Here was one, however, that was ripe and ready. That fruit, of course, had been long planted. It had steadily grown and matured. More fruit was constantly being put into the ground, and it too must wait until it had become full grown. No sermon that he preached that had not grown in this fashion.

Contrast that method with that of many a minister who chooses his "theme" on Monday or Tuesday, gives it less than a week to develop, and then preaches it the following Sunday. No wonder that it has no fullness to it.

Of course there are exceptions. Sometimes a sermon forces itself at once into the forefront. It appears full-orbed before the preacher's imagination. It must be preached and at once. Also there are special occasions for which a sermon must be fashioned to meet a particular emergency—an event which calls for immediate pulpit treatment.

Every sermon, however, that has a history to it; that has background, memory, and long association; over which the mind of the preacher has lovingly played, it may be for months or even years, into the growth and forming of which much nourishment has gradually been drawn from many sources, which has grown little by little to its maturity before it is preached—every such sermon has a glorious fullness to it when it is preached.

A preacher, therefore, will do well to let his sermon subjects rest and give them time. The idea comes to him—and he lays it away. He does not at once manufacture a sermon out of it. He puts it in the soil of his mind and lets it alone. From time to time, ideas germane to it, illustrating and amplifying it, occur to him and he puts them away with it. Thus slowly it grows and matures until one day it is ready. Then the preacher can let it alone no longer. It calls out to him and says: "I *must* be heard! Why neglect me any longer? What is the matter with me?" And he takes it lovingly out, spreads out before him all the accumulated suggestions and ideas, puts them all together until the sermon is done. Then how ready it is! What fullness is there! And the preacher fairly runs up the steps of the pulpit and the people marvel at the richness and fullness of what he has to say. The sermons of real preachers always thus have a background and history to them. They are nearly all of them very old to his mind before they are preached. Some of them have waited for years. Others have ripened more rapidly; but none of them that have not acquired the richness which comes, and comes only, by a long and silent process of cultivation and of growth.

As time goes on, and ideas and subjects multiply and grow, the preacher finds himself almost embarrassed by his riches. There are not Sundays enough in which to preach the sermons which reproach him for being left so long unuttered. He walks around the homiletical garden with the delight of an expert horticulturist. He appraises and tests his fruit to make sure that it is ready for the market. And when such a preacher opens his mouth, always there is this satisfying fullness in what he has to say.

I end as I began. All real preaching has a certain fullness and richness to it. It is spiritual fullness. There is the absence from it of all suggestion of shallowness and superficiality. It does not have the secular note. It is intellectual, and yet its dominating note is not intellectuality. It has literary form, and yet it is as far from being an essay. It has moving power, and yet the power is not that of an orator. It informs, but the information is not that of a lecture. It is something different from all of these. It is real preaching. It is the Christian evangel. It is the communication in its fullness of the grace of God which has come to men for their redemption. Such is the fullness of preaching.

It is said of Michelangelo that he came once into the studio of a pupil who had left his half-finished canvas on the easel. The master took a look at it, then with fresh paint he daubed it all over, and with a bit of crayon wrote over the ruined painting: "Amplius, amplius." Broader, fuller, richer. That is what could be said by the masters of preaching of much that goes by the name of preaching to-day: "Amplius, amplius."

III

DOES THE WORLD STILL NEED PREACHERS?

JAMES GORDON GILKEY

SOME months ago one of the New York dailies published this withering indictment of modern preachers and modern preaching. It was written by Heywood Broun, the well-known columnist and dramatic critic: "There was a time when people went to church to be inspired to lofty ideals, and escape the thrall of material things. Now the church is almost the last place in which to seek the praise of kindliness or the celebration of good will. On the basis of an investigation which extended over a couple of weeks I came across no sermon which was not devoted to the deflation of the ego. Over and over again the minister of to-day ascends his pulpit for the purpose of telling his flock that they are all miserable sinners. Out of the reports of more than forty sermons I found only one which expressed delight in anything. One Presbyterian parson did speak well of Lindbergh. As far as I can gather, all the rest were talking about the imperfections and misdeeds of mankind. God was mentioned in passing, but he seemed remote and feeble compared to the devil whose triumphs were so generally recorded. If I had a sixteen-year-old daughter, I would not want to have her hear all this defeatist talk. I would not want her to believe that the devil is mighty and must prevail. I would not tolerate a group of propagandists that wants to send her out into the world licked before she starts."

These feelings are not confined to a few newspaper men who are under contract to fill space each day and who are therefore driven to take occasional flings at everybody. From many quarters we hear an insistent denunciation of our profession. There was a time when the minister was the most highly honored man in the community, and when his sermon was the event of the week. To become a minister was the highest ambition of boyhood, and to give the world a preacher the ultimate hope of parents. How different the situation to-day! Many speakers tell audiences that if a young man wants to influence public opinion effectively, one of the last careers he should consider is the ministry. Recently one of our playwrights made the significant statement that he has always wanted to preach, and that had he been born in the seventeenth century he would undoubtedly have sought a career in the church. As it is he writes plays instead of sermons. He feels he can reach more people through the theater than he could through the church. Other critics of our profession greet with blistering scorn the sermons of our day. One of the professors in a Connecticut Valley college recently uttered these singularly kind words: "Most of the talk emanating from the holy men of to-day is indescribable drivel. Most sermons to-day exert a deadening effect on American intelligence, and tend to keep Americans from thinking for themselves." In addition to these frontal attacks on our profession, attacks often delivered in the presence of impressionable student audiences, we ministers must also endure an incessant sequence of flank attacks in the shape of jokes and gibes of all sorts. Consider the minister type as it is portrayed on the stage and the screen. Can you imagine anything more uncomplimentary? Think of the satires on preaching and preachers that appear week after week in Sunday supplements and so-called funny papers. What a picture they give of us and our work! Recently one of my friends sent me a clipping from one of these publications. A doddering deacon is talking with his minister. He says, mournfully,

"O teach me to shun the red wine and its sin,
To blush at the thought of the places I've been,
To give up tobacco and all that it means
And roam with my pastor mid pastoral scenes!"

In such a situation is there anything we can say in defense of ourselves?

If our critics would give us a fair hearing, we could remind them of several important, but often-forgotten facts. To begin with, it is inevitable that there should be a great deal of poor preaching. Why? Because there is not enough preaching genius in the United States to allocate a phenomenal preacher to each of our two hundred and thirty thousand congregations. Some churches, able to offer immense opportunities and inducements, do secure brilliant ministers. These men write week after week sermons that are interesting, helpful, and (most important of all) genuinely intelligent. Meantime other churches, less fortunately situated and equipped, must content themselves with leaders of a more ordinary type. The remaining churches, unable to offer a minister inducements of any sort, must choose between remaining pastorless and taking what they can get in the way of a pastor. The situation is exactly parallel to the one obtaining in the medical profession. There are not enough geniuses in medicine and surgery to give a first-rate man to every country village and every backwoods community. Some towns and villages must get along with second-rate medical attention just as some towns and villages (notice, please, that I did not say all) must get along with inferior preaching. But there is one significant difference between the second-rate doctor and the second-rate minister.

The stupid and unfortunate things the second-rate doctor does are usually overlooked and forgotten. In any case they do attract no more than local attention. But the second-rate minister has an entirely different experience. By virtue of the fact that he has been ordained and now stands before the world as a leader of community thought and life, every word he utters has potential publicity value. If he does or says anything ridiculous, reporters spread the news far and wide. Let some hare-brained preacher announce next Sunday that the world is coming to an end within three days, or state that the whale did swallow Jonah, or denounce all business men as conscienceless rascals, and within forty-eight hours people all over the United States will be enjoying a hearty laugh at the preacher's folly. Then energetic hack-writers, paid by the inch and yearning for a larger income, secure the minister's picture and details of his family life and feed the material to the public for weeks through the tabloids. How do intelligent ministers feel as they see this sorry work go on? They feel as intelligent physicians and surgeons would feel if the newspapers published the utterances of every quack doctor, featured pictures of every unsuccessful operation, and then labeled the travesty "The contribution of the medical profession to modern life." No one of us claims that every sermon is a work of art, or that every man who is trying to preach to-day has found the right life-work. But we do claim that some preachers are worth hearing, and that the ministry as a profession must be judged—as every other profession is judged—by its best and not its worst representatives.

Critics of the ministry should also recall that even a genius at preaching must not be expected to please everyone every Sunday. For what are the actual situations confronting him? To begin with, he discovers before he has been out of the seminary six months that tastes differ in regard to sermons just as they differ in regard to books, plays, music, and motion pictures. The sermon one man regards as perfect another man will call mediocre, and still another will dub hopeless. Some individuals want on Sunday morning a so-called "helpful" sermon. By that they mean a sermon which deals with an immediate problem of everyday life, and which suggests concrete and practical ways by which the problem can be solved. But meantime other people inwardly crave and outwardly demand an entirely different type of sermon. They say they want preaching that is "spiritual." By that they mean preaching that deals with ultimate problems of life and destiny, and carries the hearer into a realm far removed from that of daily life and immediate personal problems.

Still other people suggest that the minister preach along a third line. Let him discuss the great social problems confronting our generation—the reorganization of business and industry around the service rather than the profit-motive, the attempt to eliminate war, or the struggle to solve the liquor problem. Here are three entirely different types of sermon, each ardently desired by one group within the congregation. How can a preacher hope to please all three groups with the same address, and also please stray newspaper men who have dropped into a church for the first time in ten years in order to discover whether the preacher is enthusiastic about everything and everybody? To expect a preacher—even if he is a genius—to give the world a masterpiece every Sunday, and to please and inspire everyone within hearing distance every time he attempts a public address, is to show a complete ignorance of the most elementary of his problems and the most obvious of his difficulties.

Here is a third fact which is, perhaps, the most significant of all. In recent years two entirely new situations have arisen which make preaching harder to-day than it ever was in the past. Consider, to begin with, the effect of the radio. Week after week thousands of people tune in on the New York stations and listen to Doctor Fosdick, Doctor Cadman, and the other metropolitan notables. Gradually these listeners learn what superlative pulpit skill is—how effectively ideas can be marshaled, how brilliantly illustrations can be used, how carefully emotional climaxes can be arranged. This acquaintance with preaching at its best was formerly confined to a few thousand individuals in the communities where the great preachers happened to be. To-day this acquaintance, thanks to the radio, has been made the property of anyone who will purchase a crystal set and then devote a reasonable amount of time to the task of listening. Suppose, after hearing sermons of this type for fifty-one Sundays, the radio devotee is persuaded to attend church in person in his own town on Easter Sunday. Most of us know what happens! We have been told frankly that we do not measure up to the New York standard! No one is proposing prohibiting the use of the radio on Sunday, and certainly no one is overlooking the fact that the radio has been an incalculable benefit to millions of shut-ins. All we are saying—and any man who stops to think will agree with the statement—is that preaching is harder to-day than it was in the past, for the simple reason that the radio has raised the standard perceptibly.

The other new situation which modern preachers confront is this. The conditions of modern life have increased immensely the strain and tension of daily existence. Most of the people who go to church to-day go in a state of physical weariness or a state of nervous excitement, and in either case the task of preaching to them presents unprecedented difficulties. When in 1685 Cotton Mather was installed as minister of the North Church of Boston, he preached a sermon which, by his own admission, lasted an hour and three quarters. It was preceded by a prayer which lasted, again by Mr. Mather's own admission, an hour and one quarter. Why could the churchgoers of two hundred and fifty years ago endure three hours of praying and exhorting? Because life then was simpler, quieter, and less hectic; because the people in the pews were troubled by no sense of work waiting to be done after church, and no sense of inward tension produced by a week of superspeed existence. Beside that picture of the church service of the past we might put, in vivid contrast, the statement recently made by one of our humorists. Describing the drive and the strain of modern life, he said: "Our ancestors would sit quietly at a roadside inn for two or three days if they missed the stagecoach. We, on the contrary, squawk angrily if we miss the first section in a revolving door." Preaching to people in that condition of mind and spirit is no simple task. To speak candidly, the surprising thing is not that many modern sermons fail.

The marvel is that, under present circumstances, any of them succeed.

Granting all these facts, has the preacher a significant place in the modern world? Can he be proud of his profession and recommend it to his son as a satisfying and valuable career, or must he confess in secret that he is now playing a pitifully small part in the drama of American life, a part which could easily be struck out of the performance? When some of us grow disheartened about ourselves and our work, we remind ourselves of several situations which reveal themselves, sooner or later, in every community. The first is that literally thousands of people are now puzzled, and hopelessly puzzled, as to the meaning and the purpose of life. These agnostics of our time bear no resemblance to the militant atheists and the ministerial head-hunters of Ingersoll's day. These modern skeptics are intelligent, openminded, friendly—but immensely bewildered. Is there any purpose in human life anyway? Do the hurrying years carry us forward to some definite and divinely envisaged goal, or are we like the caged squirrels who race year after year in their circular cages—always busy, but never arriving anywhere? And when the agnostic of to-day turns from his own personal experience to the record of the human race as a whole and to the riddle of our strange universe, his sense of uncertainty deepens. Where in all the range of imaginative fiction is there anything half so strange as the actual facts of our racial life? Eighteen hundred million of us huddled together on the uneven surface of a little sphere hurtling through space seventy-five times as fast as a cannon ball travels, spinning all the time at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, and bound—who knows where? What does that mean anyway? A century ago hardly one person in the eighteen hundred million was on board the strange ship of Earth. A century hence not one of us will be here. Our places will be taken by an entirely new set of human creatures. Where did we come from? Where are we going to? What is the answer to the riddle, or is there no answer? Faced by facts like these, thousands of our contemporaries particularly the students in our colleges, lapse into hopeless bewilderment. They believe in living a reputable life. They are ready to show a certain amount of unselfishness, and display loyalty to their friends and their community. But they have no idea what life as a whole means or ought to mean. They have lost the theme of the vast symphony, and they hear only the confused sound of many unrelated instruments. Suppose, in such a time of spiritual uncertainty, a few men in each community make it their life-work to watch life carefully and steadily, study its tendencies and its apparent drifts, and then work out as best they can a clue to its hidden meaning. Suppose these men share their hard-won wisdom with anyone who cares to listen to them, speaking not as men who claim infallibility, but as men who are fellow travelers on the roads of silence and mystery, fellow seekers after truth? Will these men—these preachers—be valuable members of their community? Some people will laugh at them. Other people will leave them severely alone. But to at least a few they will be the greatest benefactors imaginable. They will be lights shining in a dark place, voices of hope in the silent mystery of the world.

Another situation which justifies our existence and our work is this: For many years a surprisingly large share of our national energy and our national wealth has been devoted to the task of devising and perfecting public-welfare agencies. Schools, colleges, and hospitals top the list. Who can compute the extent of the investment—in thought, in energy, and in actual cash—which they represent? Next in order come charitable organizations of a hundred different types. Cynics often poke fun at societies designed to protect wild flowers, and at groups of people passionately interested in the project of providing turkey dinners for the poor on Thanksgiving Day. Let us never forget that all these efforts are the expression of a kindly spirit utterly unknown in the pre-Christian world, and that this spirit is the thing that gives us hope for the future. Beyond these familiar public-welfare agencies come the new philanthropies that have developed during recent years. Organizations for building world friendship and strengthening the forces that make for world peace, organizations seeking to give the scientific knowledge and the technical skill of one nation to other nations, organizations aiming to bring children greater physical vigor and more helpful inner attitudes—how the list grows as we enumerate the projects we ourselves have seen initiated! Yet as we study this new situation one fact becomes increasingly apparent. If all these undertakings are to be carried on after the present generation dies, there must be a new generation trained in the ideal of public service and in the tradition of self-sacrificing generosity. The vast structure of American educational, charitable, and philanthropic effort rests on the secret and invisible foundation of American unselfishness. If we and our children begin to think solely of personal gain and private advantage, the welfare organizations which our parents and grandparents created for us will—one after the other—close their doors and confess defeat. Only as the spirit of kindness and the tradition of generosity are kept alive in the American community can the work which is the ultimate hope of the nation be maintained. Suppose a few men in each community make it their task to keep alive this spirit and this tradition. Suppose they plant in the minds of children the idea that greatness means service, and that each one of us is under a solemn obligation to help others survive as well as survive himself. Will those men, those preachers, be an asset to their community? The plain fact is that without them and the work they do our American philanthropies will eventually be forced to suspend operations. They will have to stay closed until someone is found to take the minister's place.

Or consider a third situation, painfully familiar to anyone whose life-work brings him in touch with great numbers of people. Most of the men and women about us to-day need courage, and need it desperately. Have you ever counted up the new situations in modern life which make insistently for disillusionment and despair—particularly in our larger cities? One is the immense loneliness engendered by the conditions of city life. Another is the feeling of personal insignificance forced upon us all by the subdivision of work and the consequent smallness of the particular task assigned to us. Another is the sense of financial insecurity thrust on the sick, the aged, the unemployed, and the semi-efficient, thrust on them relentlessly by the organization of modern business and modern industry. What chance is there for such people to accumulate even a pittance for the inevitable rainy day? Many of us fail to see the problem this new situation has created. It was recently stated for me by the superintendent of one of the rescue missions. He said, much to my surprise: "Our problem is no longer with liquor. It is no longer with sexual vice. It is with discouragement and despair. The thing the men who come to us need is new confidence and new hope." Beside these new forces making for darkness within the heart we find, of course, the perennial situations that breed fear and hopelessness. Listen to a letter that came to our church office some months ago, just after one of our services had been broadcast:

"The service I heard from your church over the radio yesterday was one of the most welcome things I ever listened to. I am a girl in a distant community, and I am just recovering from a serious accident. I must go on crutches for a long time, perhaps always. My courage was pretty good until my fiancé came to the house one day to say he wanted to break our engagement. He said the crutches were a detriment to my appearance, and that marrying a lame girl would be a handicap for him. Somehow those words took all the heart out of me. I felt as if I had come to the very end of everything. Then yesterday, when I happened to be turning the dial of my radio, your service began to come in. Something you were saying caught my attention, and then I listened all the way through. Your sermon wakened in me a determination to win out yet, to show the world that the crutches can't stop my career even if I've been told they will. If I succeed in the years ahead, I'll certainly send you word, sometime and somewhere. For the present I'll just sign myself this—A sincere, grateful girl."

"Come, Courage, come, and take me by the hand,
  I have a long and weary way to go,
  And what may be the end I do not know;
I cannot understand. . . .
Come, Courage, come, and take me by the hand!"

What an opportunity for the preacher! How the world needs him, after all!

Does the Christian message fit situations like these? Has the Christian minister something to say which a lecturer on psychology, social problems, or philosophy does not have? Surely, the time has come for us to face those questions squarely. Many of the ideas which the Christian preachers of yesterday presented to the communities of yesterday are now hopelessly outworn. The attempt to re-present them in the modern world, and the attempt to reinterest people in them, are tragic mistakes. It is the insistence of some preachers on making this mistake which has led some critics to heap ridicule upon us all. The men and women of our time, particularly the younger men and women, are not concerned in the slightest with explanations of intricate passages of Scripture. They are not concerned with denominational differences. They are certainly uninterested, hopelessly so, when we attempt to discuss and defend some ancient theological doctrine which—as far as the anxious and overwrought people in the pews are concerned—has not the slightest connection with modern life in general or their own individual problem in particular. Sermons of this type may have stated a helpful and an essentially Christian message for the people of an earlier day. They do not state such a message for the people of our time. Yet we have a Christian message, one for which the world of to-day is waiting with pitiful eagerness. It is a message we draw not from the men who interpreted Jesus or the men who organized denominational enterprises in his name. It is a message we draw from Jesus himself. We are called to preach Jesus' theory of the meaning and purpose of life—that this world is God's world, that all of us are God's children, and that if we work together and work with him, we can find happiness, we can find eternal life, we can build a better and a nobler world for our children. We are called to preach Jesus' spirit of kindness and unselfishness, a kindness that knows no barriers of race or color or creed, an unselfishness that makes us look at the need of the modern world and then say with Jesus, "For their sake I consecrate myself." We are called to preach the courage that Jesus gave needy folk centuries ago, a courage that roots itself in faith in a God who helps, and faith in a human nature capable of turning defeat into victory. These are no days to abandon our calling, turn our pulpits over to a succession of lecturers on applied psychology, social problems, and secular philosophies of life. These are days to take the creative ideas of Jesus, restate them for our modern world, and then bring them as our Christian gospel to this bewildered, disheartened age. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Those words were never truer than they are to-day.

IV

GEOGRAPHERS OF THE SPIRITUAL UPLANDS

William L. Stidger

One of the admirers of Phillips Brooks said of him, shortly after his death, that he was "as copious as a great reservoir," that he "poured forth in torrents like an upturned cloud," that he was "an apostle of the indwelling God," that he was "a geographer of the spiritual uplands."[1]

As preachers to-day we want to be all of these. But it is the last interpretative phrase in which I am particularly interested, because I believe that, if we come to look upon ourselves as "geographers of the spiritual uplands," it will not be long before we shall catch the glow and glory of the meaning of those other phrases in our ministry.

During the last few years we have come to know something of the spirit of a few men who might be called geographers of the physical uplands, and even the meanest of us have caught the glow of their appeal to humanity. I refer to that valiant voyaging group of Englishmen who have been trying to climb to the top of

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[1] *Phillips Brooks,* by John K. Hastings.

Mount Everest, the highest unattained spot on the face of the earth; to Commander Richard Byrd, who has flown airships over both the north and south poles; to Charles Augustus Lindbergh, who has become a legend in world thought because he has looked upon himself, seriously, as a geographer of the sky-uplands; and to Percival Lowell, whose pioneering calculations have, within the past year, resulted in the discovery of a new planet, Pluto, a terrestrial body forty-five times as far away from the earth as the sun.

All of these discoveries and achievements have thrilled the heart of humanity. We have looked upon these explorers, pioneers, astronomers, these valiant voyagers, as heroes of the earth and air. We have read the stories of their preparations for these expeditions, the adventures of the expeditions themselves, and the results of them, with wide-eyed interest. These men have gripped the imaginations of all human kind in every language and clime.

In some such spirit must we who are preachers look upon ourselves as geographers of the spiritual uplands; and some such reward shall come to us when we have been true to that gigantic Gothic goal of the ministry.

There are other uplands than physical uplands. These are the spiritual uplands, and they are vastly more important to humanity even than these newly discovered physical regions of which I have spoken. Our uplands deal with the eternal verities of life. They too must have their explorers, their adventuring souls, their daring pioneers and prophets, who will go out and come back with pictures more thrilling even than the pictures that Byrd has brought back. It is the business of the preacher to go out ahead, and to be calling the world to "Come up higher!" It is the business of the prophet of God to explore the spiritual uplands as these other men have explored the physical uplands to find new stars, planets, and peaks. This is a high and holy task. This, and nothing less than this, is the business of the preacher.

I

We Are Geographers of the Spiritual Uplands of Idealism

Just as these men whom I have mentioned have been geographers of the uplands of the physical earth and sky, so are we the geographers of the spiritual uplands of idealism.

Dr. John R. Scotford, in the Christian Century of July 16, 1930, in an article entitled "Can the Preacher Be Saved?" in speaking of the preacher as an artist, a man who deals in the idealism of the earth, shoots these regnant phrases into our memories:

"The truly great preacher comes of the same brood as the poet, the novelist, the sculptor, the artist. His business is to look out on life with clear eyes and then to tell others in an effective way that which he has seen. And for the man who starts from the Christian point of view there is certainly much of beauty and of interest to be discovered in the world about us."

. . . .

"The preacher needs to look at himself and his work in a new light. In the past he has been a propagandist; in the future he will be more and more of an artist. The world is weary of being harangued, but it is hungry for the interpretation of existence."[2]

The preacher must live in a world of idealism—the idealism of art, music, history, and literature. The people whom he serves will not be able to explore in these regions as much as he; and they will look to him to go deep into these lores and come back with pictures in the spiritual realm comparable to those Byrd has brought back from the south pole to educate and inspire them. It is his glorified task to lift the levels of life; to explore the Mount Everests of the spiritual world, and to lift not only the eyes of the people unto those hills, but the levels of their living at the same time. One great psychologist has a phrase which I like in connection with our gospel, and that phrase is "lifting the levels of life." That is our task—to lift the levels of life; the levels of individual, industrial, political, and social life.

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[2] Reprinted by permission.

I cannot forget, nor do I ever desire to forget, a morning devotional address given at Saratoga Springs when Bishop William A. Quayle lifted an entire General Conference into the regions of the spiritual uplands. He talked on the theme, "Our Conversation Is in Heaven." The heart of his thought was that everything about us begins on earth, but it ends in eternity. He was talking about money, about raising babies, about friendships, and about preaching. He was talking of preaching as being rooted in earth, but reaching into heaven. He summed it all up when he began to name some of the prophetic souls who had gone on even further afield in the spiritual uplands. He sang into our souls in unforgettable music the very thesis of my address:

"Was not beloved Bishop Smith here four years ago? Yes. Where is he now? In heaven. Was not Bishop Walden here four years ago, with his stooped shoulders and his keen eye? Yes. Where is he now? In heaven. Was not Bishop Warren here, with his stalwart figure that looked as if he could walk across the landscape of eternity and never get tired? Yes. Where is he? He is *on* the landscape of eternity taking his walk. Was not Robert McIntyre here four years ago, with his dreamy, far-away look?

Yes. Where is he now? He is where he looked. Was not Bishop Moore here, with the spirit of a soldier and the heart of an angel? Yes. Where is he now? He is over where soldiership and angelhood are one. Was not Naphtali Luccock, that crystal soul and winsome personality, here? Where is he now? He is with the crystal Christ."[3]

And I add one name. I might add many since that day. Was not Bishop William Alfred Quayle here, so recently that some of the younger of us remember the thrill of his eloquence, the comradeship of his sympathy, the lift of his idealism; the joy he had in being intrusted with the business of preaching the gospel of Christ; the man who always pointed out to us the spiritual uplands? Yes. Where is he now? He is a citizen of the spiritual uplands of which he was a geographer then.

Mr. William C. Cameron, formerly editor of the Dearborn Independent, wrote me a while ago about Dr. George A. Gordon and his prayers in the Old South Church. He said of these prayers: "After Doctor Gordon had prayed, the service immediately moved up one story and from that new level he preached." As geographers of the spiritual uplands we lift the levels and call all men to higher heights of idealism.

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[3] "Devotions." The Methodist Book Concern.

II

WE ARE GEOGRAPHERS OF THE SPIRITUAL UPLANDS OF THE INVISIBLES

It is curious enough—and heartening to me—that I am able to open this division of my thought with a quotation from the famous English philosopher and scientist J. B. S. Haldane, who, in The Nation, in an article entitled, "What I Believe," makes a veritable prophet's plea for the reality of an invisible world:

"Man lives in two worlds—the visible world which changes with time and an invisible world whose constituents do not change. I have not much use for people who are not in touch with the invisible world. At best they are but good animals, and too often not even that.

"The men and women who have done best both for themselves and for their fellows are those who have brought these worlds into relation. We can hear music by radio to-day because James Clark Maxwell fifty-six years ago embodied an extremely important set of properties of electro-magnetic waves in a set of equations. Those equations represent an eternal truth—something in the invisible world. Their discovery rendered wireless communication possible. If you do not make any contact with this timeless world (in other words, have no inner life), you have at best a very precarious hold on happiness. Given that contact, you enjoy a very considerable security from the results of misfortune in the visible world, and a complete immunity from boredom."[4]

Science buttresses the Gothic cathedral of our belief in this invisible world as Doctor Haldane, himself a great scientist, says. We have learned to accept from science, without question, the reality of the invisible uplands. We accept the reality of electricity because we see its results, although we cannot see electricity itself. We accept the reality of those invisible forces we call cohesion, gravitation, and magnetism. We accept a world of bacteria, although it is an invisible world. We accept the scientific reality of a world of electronic power, although we cannot see it.

Charles P. Steinmetz, according to Roger W. Babson, believed in this spiritual world of the invisible, and with prophetic foresight suggested to him that the next great era of man would be an exploration of this invisible world. In an article which recently appeared in our Christian Advocates entitled "The Meaning of Religious Education to Our American Life" he tells of a conversation with Mr. Steinmetz:

"The late Charles P. Steinmetz, who was recognized by the General Electric Company and other similar organizations as the world's foremost electrical engineer, was once visiting in my home. While talking over with him prospective future inventions in connection with radio, aeronautics, power transmission, I asked him, 'What line of research will see the greatest development during the next fifty years?'

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[4] Reprinted by permission.

"After careful thought, he replied: 'Mr. Babson, I think the greatest discovery will be made along spiritual lines. Here is a force which history clearly teaches has been the greatest power in the development of man and history. Yet we have been merely playing with it, and never seriously studying it as we have the physical forces. Some day people will learn that material things do not bring happiness and are of little use in making men and women creative and powerful. Then the scientists of the world will turn their laboratories over to the study of God and prayer and the spiritual forces which, as yet, have hardly been scratched. When this day comes, the world will see more advancement in one generation than it has seen in the last four.' "

This paragraph in Mr. Babson's article is headed "Exploring the Invisible." That very phrase indicates that it might have been written as a perfect illustration of this thesis on preaching, "Geographers of the Spiritual Uplands." Science is teaching even the ministers of God to believe in their own unexplored field;

to believe in this upland of the invisibles, this upland in which we ought to be the prophets and the geographers.

The poets also have buttressed the Gothic cathedral of our belief in that invisible world of which we are geographers. Rabindranath Tagore, in *The King of the Dark Chamber,* tells of a disciple of the Invisible King, who is taunted by the materialists, the mechanists, the behaviorists, the cynics, who say: "Show us your king! If there is any real King of the Dark Chamber, he would show his face."

The disciple of this unseen King made the usual mistake of trying to answer the doubters by arguments and reason. We do not awaken religious consciousness through the heads of men, but through their hearts. We do not argue them into religion. The way to religious awakening is through the heart of a man. The poor disciple of the King of the Dark Chamber feebly stuttered: "But look at the nice order and regularity prevailing all over the place—how do you explain it without a king?"[5]

But the intellectual answer did not convince. However, when he began to testify to a personal experience, he became convincing to the materialists, the mechanists and the behaviorists of his day and his land. Suddenly he abandoned his intellectual approach and cried out from his heart: "Do you not feel a faint breeze blowing? Do you not sense a soft perfume? I seem to feel his footsteps in my heart. Being his servant of the Dark Chamber, I have developed a sense. I can know and feel without seeing. The door is opening. He is coming! My King is coming!"[6]

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[5] The Macmillan Company.

At that moment the disciple of the King became convincing. He became convincing when he talked of what he felt and knew; what he sensed; what he had experienced of the reality of that invisible King. Again when he told of how he came to pledge his loyalty and allegiance to that invisible King did he become convincing: "I could not tell you how it happened. I do not know that myself. A day came when all the rebel in me knew itself beaten, and then my whole nature bowed down in humble resignation in the dust of the earth. And then I saw, I saw that he was as matchless in beauty as in terror. Oh, I was saved, I was rescued!"[7]

I think that this is the kind of talk the geographer of the spiritual uplands of the invisibles will have to use. He will have to adopt the talk of the Mystic, of one who has seen and felt and knows—and must speak. He must speak of what he has seen with his inner eyes, the eyes of the spirit; of what he has seen out there in the spiritual uplands of the invisible world. Then he will be convincing.

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[6] *The King of the Dark Chamber,* by Tagore. The Macmillan Company.

[7] *Ibid.*

Edward Rowland Sill wrote a poem called "Venus de Milo," in which he is contrasting the Greek pagan world with the Christian world of idealism and with the reality of an invisible world. It is a tremendous poem. The last lines sing a haunting refrain of the reality of the invisible footsteps of which we preachers speak:

"But as heaven deepens and the Cross and Lyre
Lift up their stars beneath the northern crown,
Upon the yearning of the world's desire
I shall beware of answer coming down,
And something, when my heart the darkness stills,
Shall tell me without sight or any sound
That other footsteps are upon the hills."[8]

That is it. Well said, Poet! That is the good news of the gospel we preach? "That other footsteps are upon the hills," other footsteps than the footsteps of the pagan, the materialist, the mechanist, the behaviorist. Some of us hear the footsteps of the invisible King of the Dark Chamber. The world of to-day needs such a message and—such a messenger.

We are too much obsessed with machinery these days. We live in a world on wheels. We go like the wild winds. We put the lightnings to shame. Overnight we are engaged in a spree of breaking records. We have become pole-sitters and tree-climbers. We are engaged in a wild orgie of endurance tests. We are consumed with a speed mania. Nothing will go fast enough for us. As old Father Taylor once said, even in the days of the horse and buggy, "If it were possible, this generation would be glad to put spurs to lightning and blow a trumpet into the ears of thunder." How much more is that true of us to-day with our automobiles, airships and radios?

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[8] *Complete Poems*, by Edward Rowland Sill. Houghton Mifflin Company.

We do not stop to hear "the still small voice." But the prophets of God ought to be about the business of telling people "that other footsteps are upon the hills." And not only the scientists and the poets have pointed out the reality of the invisible uplands we preach, but the New Testament buttressed the Gothic cathedral of our belief in the reality of the invisible world.

We hear such phrases in the New Testament as "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." It talks such tall talk as is found in the phrase: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, . . . Who is the image of the invisible God." It talks of a Christ who left as a last will and testament to preachers of his truth: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

If ever there was what we call intangible talk, it is in these two verses from Matthew. It sounds like some weird, wild fairy tale. It talks of a "Holy Ghost," of a Christ who died on a cross as going along with us in our great task. It says that he, being dead, will still go with us. What impossible talk that is! But that is the trumpet blast of it. That is the daring of it. That is the great commission which we preachers have as geographers of the invisible world and prophets of the invisible Christ.

I presume that Dr. Lyman Abbott, one of the keenest intellectuals we have had in many generations, believed in this invisible world when he wrote about the public prayers of Dr. Edward Everett Hale in about the same spirit that Mr. Cameron speaks of the prayers of Dr. George Gordon: "I did not notice then, I do not recall now, the form of his prayer. But I was conscious of an invisible Presence in the room, as of one with whom he was talking face to face. Nothing else counted."[9]

Bishop Francis J. McConnell, in his book *Religious Certainty,* strikes that same resounding note in this paragraph: "The belief of men in the unseen is not only a fact, and a stubborn fact, but it is a fact which leads to beneficent consequences. If we are to say that belief in itself is no argument, we have to explain why it is that the real tides of largest health seem somehow to depend on the trust of men in the unseen."[10]

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[9] *Silhouettes of My Contemporaries,* by Lyman Abbott.

To sum up: The scientists, the poets, the intellectuals, the New Testament, and the prophetic preachers buttress the Gothic cathedral of our belief that we are geographers of the spiritual uplands of the invisibles.

III

A GOSPEL OF AFFIRMATION

This leads us to the thought that if we have lived in the spiritual uplands of idealism and the invisible, we will preach a gospel of affirmation.

"He spake as one having authority," they said of the one great Christ.

We must have the ring of affirmation in our preaching if that preaching becomes prophetic. And we will have that note of affirmation if we have looked upon ourselves as geographers of the spiritual uplands. The three cardinal doctrines of Methodism are conversion, assurance, and sanctification. Perhaps if we had either the first, or were aiming toward the third, even remotely, we would not have to worry about the middle doctrine. We would then have assurance and we would then preach with affirmation instead of apology. We would then talk like prophets instead of mumbling our messages like puppets. We would then have the spirit of the affirmative poet psalmist who sings: "I have believed; therefore have I spoken," and men would take note of what we say. The world has a right to expect affirmation from its preachers, to expect leadership from its leaders. "If the salt hath lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted?" is the world's query of us.

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[10] The Methodist Book Concern.

Bruce Barton expressed that question for the common man in *What Can a Man Believe?* That is the question the common man is asking of the preacher and the Christian leader. And—men have a right to an answer to that question, and an answer that comes in no uncertain tones. The world is wistful to hear prophetic voices of men who believe something, who have seen and heard and can tell of what they have seen and heard; of men who speak as "having authority."

I have heard such a voice speaking this summer and I cite the instance to illustrate what I mean. Here is a man who makes no apology for the belief within him that there is "a God in Israel." I refer to Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, who, in a recent article in the Christian entitled "The Things I Know About Religion," talks with affirmation. The heart of what this preacher knows and says he knows about religion, is caught in five short, affirmative sentences, and I set them down not only as an illustration of my thesis of affirmation, but I set the man down as one of the geographers of the spiritual uplands:

1. "The first fact to be discovered is the reality of the moral law or the moral life in the soul of man.

2. "The second thing I know is that I have the right and the power to choose what is right and refuse what is wrong, or to refuse what is right and to choose what is wrong.

3. "The third thing I know is that in the depths of me, deeper than what we call morality, there is something wistful, a loneliness that walks with me in the morning; a sadness that haunts me at eventide. It is something which is alive to beauty, something akin to poetry, if you mean by poetry a certain distance, loneliness, a singing. It is an inscrutable God-consciousness.

4. "The fourth thing I know is that both my moral and my religious nature hungering for beauty, truth, and goodness, find fulfillment, realization, satisfaction in the life and character and personality of Jesus Christ as nowhere else.

5. "And the fifth thing I know is that having seen that vision of spiritual beauty, I can never be happy until I do follow all the way."[11]

Here, in no uncertain terms, we have a prophetic of affirmation, a preacher who has seen something, who has felt something, and who believes something.

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[11] Reprinted by permission.

And in such an age as this, an age of unbelief, or at least in an age of universal uncertainty, this "The Things I Know About Religion" comes to us with a heartening tug upward. It comes like the lift of the tide to all of our preaching craft, large and small alike.

This is an age of uncertainty, and the ministry has partaken of the cup of its unbelief. We need to drink deep from whatever fountains of certainty we find. There is no great note of affirmation in our preaching. We find the minor chord of equivocation, of mental reservation, of philosophical fence-straddling in our pulpit today, as Dr. George A. Gordon found it in his day. On returning from hearing a certain sermon this great Boston preacher characterized that sermon in this devastating phrase: "The sermon was a polite little essay, and it has no more relation to life and eternity than the quack of a duck in a milldam."[12]

The people have lost confidence in the pulpit because preachers do not seem to know what life and eternity are all about. They do not seem certain of their own gospel. Even magazine discussions of the ministry reflect this lack of affirmation. In an article which appeared recently in Scribner's Magazine, written by Henshaw Ward, under the title "The Disappearance of God," the author says that just as the idea of hell has disappeared from our preaching so the idea of God is disappearing also. He quotes Harry Elmer Barnes' book *The Twilight of Christianity* and bluntly and brutally lays open the heart of our wishy-washy, willy-nilly, take-it-or-leave-it preaching, with this challenging accusation: "The believer, and not the infidel, talks God out of existence."[13]

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[12] *My Education and Religion.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

In this article Doctor Ward speaks of "The Disappearance of Hell" as an accomplished fact. He tells of how a few generations ago, back in the nineties, hell was a solid fact and faith in our preaching, but that by 1910 hell was everywhere disappearing out of the vocabulary of the pulpits. By 1929 Dean Inge had formally pronounced hell as nonexistent.

Perhaps that was not so serious. But it is a serious thing that many theological teachers, preachers, and church philosophers are in the process of doing the same thing with God. He reports Father Fulton J. Sheen as saying that "the Protestant Modernists are preparing to throw God overboard in the same fashion."

If that is true, then it is no wonder that our preaching sounds like "the quack of a duck in a milldam." Then comes along an additional challenging thrust from Dr. William Lyon Phelps, who, in his own pages in Scribner's Magazine, called, "As I Like It," lays the blame, not upon our accusers, but at the door of our church leaders, our "blind leaders of the blind" in this no uncertain paragraph: "Many Protestant ministers and many professors in Protestant seminaries regard faith in the divinity of Christ, in a personal God, and in the future as unintelligent. If they think so, then they are correct in not believing in any of these. But is it intelligent to continue in their profession as ministers and teachers of future ministers? For the real difficulty with Protestantism to-day is not in the pews, but in the pulpit. The hungry sheep look up and are not fed."[14]

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[13] Henshaw Ward, Scribner's Magazine.

No man can read the current magazines of to-day and not feel that there is an atmosphere of uncertainty in religious leadership. No man can visit the lecture rooms of our theological seminaries and not feel the same thing. No man can sit in the pews of America and not feel the lack of affirmation. Dr. Campbell Morgan sums up his whole rule for preaching in Goethe's statement: "If you have any certainties give them to us. We have doubts enough of our own."

More than any other single thing we need the note of affirmation in our pulpits. The world is wistful for it.

For such an age of unbelief we preachers find a comforting document of affirmation in Bishop McConnell's book, already referred to, entitled

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[14] Reprinted by permission.

Religious Certainty. The preacher who feels the quicksands of unbelief, of uncertainty under the house of his ministry, who doubts, hedges, and flounders in his pulpit, would do well to read this book as a basis for an understanding of the intellectual reasons for affirmation. If he will read this book, he will feel a foundation of adamant glide under his preaching.

The hour has come for an affirmative gospel in our churches. We are the geographers of the spiritual uplands, and, as such, it is our business to be out ahead, pointing out the lands that lie beyond; the Promised Lands of the spiritual necessities; to see, to know, and to tell what we see and what we know of the invisibles; of the world of idealism.

I began this address by referring to a group of contemporary men who might well be called geographers of the physical uplands. I want now to tell the stories of a group of contemporary men who might well be called geographers of the spiritual uplands.

I refer to Gandhi, Kagawha, and Ramsay MacDonald. These three great leaders of humankind have a secret. The secret of their power is common to each of them.

I read recently an explanation of the personal power of Ramsay MacDonald. A woman reporter, determined to find out what that secret was, followed him for months in America and

England. She remembered that he was an outcast in his own nation twelve years ago, despised by his own countrymen, but that now he has become one of the great prophetic leaders of the earth.

What is the power? What accounts for the man? Here is the answer as she puts it down:

"He's not the least what I thought he was. He's got stuff; brains, looks, voice. No wonder he stands out. And he's got something the other men have not got. Personal quality? Vision? I don't know, but there it is. He has seen something, something big, bigger than himself, and —it shines through!"

E. Stanley Jones gives us the same story about Gandhi, that other great prophet. He tells of a visit to Gandhi. There was an address and then a long period of quiet. As Stanley Jones sat in that room he noticed on the wall a picture of Christ upon the cross. As Gandhi spoke a gentle breeze blew through an open door and turned that picture from the shadows until the light fell upon it. Gandhi looked up at it. Then he turned to Stanley Jones and said, "Will you sing that hymn?"

"Do you mean, 'Lead, Kindly Light'?" Jones asked him, knowing that was one of his favorite hymns. The saint answered "No," and added, " 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.' "

Those who have read the life story of Kagawha, the great Japanese spiritual leader, know that in his life also "there came a day" when the heavens opened and he saw something—something bigger than himself—and it shone through!

And now I go backward into American preaching history to strengthen my thesis. I have just noted a group of contemporary spiritual leaders who have won the confidence of humanity. I go back to the great unforgettable preachers of our own nation. It is a curious and a fascinating fact that into the lives of these men "there came a day" when they saw something; something bigger than themselves; and it shone through their lives ever after, and through their preaching, with a great radiance. I illustrate my thought with three of these unforgettable preachers, all three of whom happened to be Boston ministers; and one of them preached in the pulpit where these addresses are being given. I doubt if there is a city on the face of the earth where so much honor has been paid to preachers as in Boston, unless it is Edinburgh. And even in Boston we have erected more enduring bronze monuments to ministers than in any other city on earth. Here within the city limits we have erected bronze memorials to Channing, Brooks, Parker, and Hale. We know how to honor the prophets of God in Boston as they honor them in no other city on earth.

Of these great preachers of the past I want to say that they had an experience of God; an illumination, a new birth, conversion, regeneration—whatever you wish to call it. They saw something, something bigger than themselves; and it shone through.

Whatever we may say of these men, the fact of their illumination remains. They had something to talk about and they talked about it. They offered no apologies in talking about a religious experience that came into their lives—a sense of God-consciousness. Indeed, they believed in it so much that, after a lifetime of service and power, they set down these experiences of God—some of them after half a century had passed—and they testified that these illuminations had lasted through all the years as the great realities of their experience.

Dr. George A. Gordon tells of his own illumination in these words: "There was at length a great religious experience. I recall that experience in Appleton Chapel that has been central in my life. It came like a flash; it came to stay; it has been a permanent light. Religion in that moment appeared to me to mean sovereign insight into life's meaning, insight that generates power to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. It gives a man a sun in the night and in the light."[15]

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[15] *My Education and Religion.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

There came to Phillips Brooks that same great hour of illumination when he saw something, something big, something bigger than himself, and it shone through all of his great ministry..

Dr. Marcus D. Buell tells me of an incident when Doctor Brooks was speaking to the theological students down on Bromfield Street, when, at the end of his talk, he gave the students an opportunity to ask questions. One pimply-faced theologue, of the Fundamentalist type, who looked upon himself as the keeper of the covenant of truth and the ark of the faith, impertinently said to Phillips Brooks, who was under constant criticism from the conservative wing of the church, "Doctor Brooks, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ as much as you did at first?"

Doctor Brooks turned white. But he did not speak in anger. Then he smiled and replied: "While I very much question any man's right to ask that question, I will say that I love the Lord Christ more than I ever did before, and more than I ever thought I would be capable of loving him."

Dr. Edward Everett Hale, in whose pulpit I humbly stand to-night, tells of a certain great light that came to him in these words: "I had been reading in my musty, dark room by an air-tight stove. I put my book down for what people call reflection and I saw, or perceived, or felt, that I was not alone and could not be alone.

This present Power knows me and loves me. I know him and love him. He is here. I am here. We are together. And it is a companionship much closer than I could have with any human being sitting in that chair."[16]

This is the secret of all power in preaching. It was the secret of a group of men who met in an upper room when the Church of God was born. They saw something, something big, something bigger than themselves; and it shone through. They came down from that upper room flaming evangels of the new gospel; a something which transformed them in the flash of an hour; something they had sighted out on the spiritual uplands.

That was the secret of Paul's new power. On a dusty road on the way to the world's oldest city, in the heat of the day, he saw and heard something; something intangible; something he could not define or diagram or blue-print; something invisible; a force, a power which changed his way of feeling and thinking and living; something big, something bigger than himself; and it shines through his life to this day. And in that hour Paul too became one of the geographers of the spiritual uplands. It is in this apostolic succession that we follow.

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[16] *Silhouettes of My Contemporaries.* By Lyman Abbott. Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

V

THE PRIESTLY FUNCTION OF THE MINISTER

CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON

IT is unfortunate that our consciousness of the priest has been made vivid at the point of his clash with the prophet. Most of us evangelical Protestants know but a little of the priest and most of what we know about him is bad. The priest has long been in disfavor with us. He appears in the rôle of an obstructionist, a guardian and a preserver of the established order. He is contrasted with the prophet in terms of disparagement and even odium. He obstructs the way of the prophet. It is the priesthood that makes progress difficult, offering, as it does, the chief resistance to innovation. The prophet represents progress. The priest represents the *status quo.* This antithesis has become familiar to our ears. And it is realistic enough. But it is a narrow and one-sided view of the priesthood. It takes the priest at his worst. It ignores the fact that religion in its organized expression depends upon the priest, that there probably would be no religion at all were it not for him.

I am thinking now not of certain sacerdotal implications of priestly function, such as the confessional—whether Catholic or Protestant—or the conferring of grace through the sacraments, or of any of the prerogatives which are claimed for the priest under the general assumption that he has been clothed with divine authority to mediate between God and man. Whether these functions, as formulated and defended under a theological system which none of us nowadays accepts, can be translated over into the terms of our social psychology is a question upon which I have my own opinion. But it is a question we have not yet even begun to canvass. Most of us have too readily assumed that the priesthood in religion stands or falls with the monarchistic and legalistic system of thinking about God and the church. Given that system, we are willing to concede that there is a basis upon which the special status of a priest as mediator can be justified. But with the abandonment of that system, the modern mind has, I think, too rashly concluded that there is no place left for the priest. What we want, and all we need, is the prophet, or the prophet and the teacher.

This, as I view it, is a costly mistake. In all candor, I look forward to the rehabilitation of the priesthood. Rehabilitation is exactly what I mean. The new priest will wear no more the musty garments of autocracy, or of legalism, but the new garment with which a living social theology may clothe him. We have not yet begun to prepare his habiliments. But the materials are at hand which suggest that we may now begin to do so, if we will, and surely the need of it is beginning to get hold of our minds as we contemplate the tattered condition of the Christian ministry which the church now has. Please grasp precisely what I intend to convey by this figure of speech. By habiliments I mean the terms in which we rationalize the priest. The old apologetic for him has broken down. But we must provide a new apologetic for him. We must justify his presence and special place in that collective society named the church, by the use of concepts which have meaning and validity for us to-day. Merely redefining his status does not mean that we will have the same old priesthood. A new apologetic for the priesthood will probably give us a new kind of priest. His conception of himself and our conception of his function will, no doubt, make him a new person, but the legitimate and necessary functions of the traditional priesthood will be conserved in his new office.

Whether a consistent modern apologetic for the priesthood will reject or keep the conception of priesthood as an order, set apart from the laity in a self-contained system, self-governing, perpetuating itself by an authority over which the laity have little or no control, and perhaps deriving unique sanction from its own historic continuity, are questions which we will also have to face anew, but they do not belong within the limitations I have set for this paper. What I am interested in at the moment is to go below all these controversial details of a functioning priesthood, and discover, if possible, a generic and inclusive concept under which the legitimacy and need of a priesthood may be justified and illuminated.

This concept I find in the basic fact that whatever else religion is, it is a social expression of certain beliefs, aspirations, and emotions cherished by a communal or organized group. I do not give this as a *definition* of religion, not by any means, though I know it is given as such in some quarters. It is, however, a true *description* of *one aspect* of religion, and a fundamental aspect. Religion is a social expression—no one will dispute that. It is not an individualistic thing. When Professor Whitehead said that "religion is what a man does with his solitariness," he did not mean to isolate the individual from the group—that would be a violation of his own philosophy. The impulses out of which religion springs rush inevitably into communal expression. Religion takes always a social form. It may be a simple form, merely a communal performance of specific acts, as among primitive tribes, or it may be a highly organized system with many differentiated functions, as in advanced societies, but in any case it is social. We are accustomed to the use of a generic term to designate the particular social expression of religion; it is the term "cultus." A cultus is the form which a given religion takes in its social expression. The term covers ceremonies, standards, beliefs, offices of leadership and administration. Cultus is a rich term, almost as rich as "culture"; it is indeed the term which connotes that segment of human culture to which the adjective "religious" applies. Each form of primitive religion is a cultus. Hinduism is a cultus. Christianity is a cultus. The Roman Catholic Church is a cultus. The Anglican Church is a cultus. The Methodist Church is a cultus. The Mennonite Church is a cultus. Christian Science is a cultus. The Quakers are a cultus—that is to say, each is an expression of certain specific aspirations, beliefs, emotions, in a body of recognized conventions, habits, and organization.

This is all very commonplace, I know, but it is important that it be restated if we are to make progress in our present thinking. The fact that religion organizes itself, that it becomes a cultus, is at once both its strength and a limitation of its strength. It is its strength because religion needs recognized forms for its own self-fulfillment; and if it conceives itself, as the higher religions do, as an active force in the larger social order, it can function as such only through organization, that is to say, a church. It is a limitation of its strength just as any institutionalization of an ideal limits the ideal which it is designed to serve. This is a roundabout way of saying a commonplace thing, namely, that religion, like every other major human interest, vibrates between the two poles of institution and innovation. Institutions we must have, and innovations we must have; and there seems to be no way of evading the perennial conflict between them. The dilemma is inescapable. Religion needs institutions to give it power and it needs innovations to give it moral reality.

We have here the basis of the conflict between the prophet and the priest. The priest emerges with the cultus. He is its symbol. He is its guardian and administrator. It gives him his status. It invests him with specific functions. All his interests are on the side of maintaining the existing cultus—its traditions, its ritual, its doctrines, its forms of organization. But the tendency of the cultus, left in charge of the priest, is toward decadence. The cultus tends to lose its original freshness and reality. It ceases to be a means to an end and becomes an end in itself. Virtue is supposed to inhere in the mere correctness of its observances. The priest conceives himself as the proprietor of a vested interest. He becomes the bulwark of reactionism and unreality. The priestly function becomes static.

Then arises the prophet. He attacks the whole priestly business. He exposes its temple-treading for what it is. He lays bare to the community the hollowness and hypocrisy of the church. It is from the priest as he appears in this clash with the prophet that most of us have derived our conception of priesthood. It is an inadequate and unjust conception, for it takes account of the priest only after he and his cultus have become decadent. We forget that the priest is not only the guardian and conserver of the cultus, but that he was the creator of it. The priest was the instrument of the collective group by which the cultus took form. In its pristine character the cultus was a genuine expression of the power and reality of religion. The fact that it has now declined in power, and lost much of its reality, and that the priest still defends it against every innovation, does not justify our sweeping condemnation of priesthood as such. We must look at the other side, or—if I may say so—at the other *end* of the priestly function: the originating end rather than the decadent end. If we observe the priest at the originating, the constructive, end of the cultus, we shall see him functioning in an admirable capacity. He is creating a cultus. He is seeking for forms and rituals, for dramatic actions and modes of speech by which the living aspirations, beliefs, and emotions of religion may be given objective communal expression. The cultus is the flowering of the priestly activity. We have a cultus because we have priests. Without priests we would have no church, no organized expression of religion as a collective social entity.

Let me repeat that I am not discussing priesthood in terms of a special priestly order, some hierarchical system of priesthood. I am discussing not an order, but a function. In the narrower sense of the term, George Fox would probably be as remote from the priesthood as any religious leader we could mention. His Quaker movement was a revolt against the whole priestly system with all its implications. He will probably turn over in his grave when I call him a priest. But that I deliberately do. When Fox wrought out the formless forms of worship for his Quaker group, when he originated the ritual of silence, he was acting in a priestly capacity. You do not get rid of the priest by getting rid of sacerdotalism. You may get rid of the office and the order, but you must have the function of priesthood if you have religion at all. Bishop McConnell stands forth in our eyes as a prophet—a major prophet of our time. But he is also a priest. His being a bishop is proof of that. He stands within that cultus named Methodism and administers it in accordance with its traditional genius. (Perhaps he feels a little awkward, but he does not resign!) The fact that he conceives his status as an office rather than an order does not change the character of his function. You and I are priests, no matter how low-church our conception of ourselves may be. Each of us stands within the cultus of his denomination, administers its affairs, conducts its worship and performs all its offices in conformity with its traditions and genius. As such we are performing the priestly function.

We have now come to the point where we must define sharply the issue to which our thought has been leading us. It is this. Our Christianity has reached a stage in its historic unfolding where its supreme demand is for the aggressive exercise of the priestly function by its ministers, and that not merely by administering the cultus which we have inherited, but by creating a new cultus. The old cultus is worn out. It has become spiritually bankrupt. Its impotence and irrelevance are evidenced on every side. To try to express the living faith of to-day through the old rubrics is no longer possible. It is not sincere. And sincerity in its priesthood is the very life of true religion. The time is here for our ministers to exercise their priestly function on its responsible, creative side. The only alternative course leads to decadence. Religion now waits for the priest, for the constructive artist in the social expression of the spiritual life, whose work is to body forth the religious imponderables of our times.

It is the presence of the prophet among us that now makes this work of the priest necessary. The prophet has been some time with us. He has brought to our attention a whole new world of religious idealism which lies quite outside the scope of our churchly forms and traditions. He has made it imperative that religion shall take on new forms and embrace new areas of life. The prophet's work cannot be completed by the prophet. It can only be completed when the priest comes to his aid. The new wine has burst the old wine-skins. Religion now awaits the coming of the makers of new wine-skins. The prophet's message will always remain an ideal suspended in midair until a priesthood arises within the church and begins to incorporate the new idealism in the forms through which organized religion expresses itself. The continued life of organized religion as an effective force in society now depends upon the appearance of a priesthood competent to take the dreams and ideals of the prophet and weave them into the fabric of collective ritual and churchly institution. That is to say, the idealism of the prophet must become a cultus if it is to have the power of religion.

We are living in a period in which the intellectual content of religion has been pretty thoroughly revolutionized. The new world view which science began to open up in the nineteenth century has been steadily displacing the old world view. The picture which science draws of an evolutionary universe is fast becoming the mental imagery through which men and women look out on nature and human society. There can be no doubt that the old imagery is rapidly fading while the new imagery grows in vividness.

The weakness of churchly religion to-day derives chiefly from the fact that its cultus was fashioned under the influence of a world view which no longer possesses reality. The things we do in church, the things we say and sing, the imagery with which our prayers and worship are furnished forth, belong to a world outlook which the present generation is abandoning. Some worshipers are able to translate the meaning of the traditional rubrics into forms congenial to modern knowledge, and are thus able to keep their hold upon the eternal verities and to maintain their allegiance to the church. But the number who can do so is but a small proportion of the potential constituency of organized religion. Religion can hardly function perpetually in forms which have to be reinterpreted, or explained away, or apologized for, to the great body of potential worshipers. If it is to be spontaneous, and if it is to have the "feel" of reality, it must express itself in forms congenial to the actual world upon which it looks out. This is not to deny the value of ancient forms and rubrics. Where they do not offend intelligence and moral sense they are a means of binding the past to the present, thus giving to the worshiper not only the sense of perspective, but of the living reality of the past itself. And this belongs to the essence of religion.

But the need of revitalizing the cultus is not due alone to a changed intellectual outlook. It is demanded also by the emergence in the modern conscience of a whole new set of moral ideals which the traditional rubrics make no provision for. So long as the traditional rubrics make no place for these new moral imperatives, religion is bound to languish. Many sensitive minds, unable to conceive of a vital religion except one inseparably bound up with ethical ideals, will be strongly inclined to abandon the religious institution altogether, and to hold that there is more religion outside than inside the church. The fact that an occasional prophet in this pulpit and in that stands forth to champion the new moral ideal will not suffice to win them back to the church. They will not heartily embrace organized religion until the forms by which the religious community collectively expresses its aspirations do truly reflect the ethical convictions and the intellectual beliefs which they hold and which they know are held by the best mind of the church itself.

To provide such modes of collective expression is the basic and essential function of a priesthood. It is not enough that the aspirations and imagery of the long past shall be reflected in our forms of worship and in our ecclesiastical procedure. The ethical values and the intellectual realities of contemporary intelligence and conscience must also be registered in our acts of worship. Moral ideals are the stuff of true worship and true religion. No moral ideal is foreign to religion. But any moral ideal will *seem* foreign to religion until it finds utterance in the ritual of the church.

Organized religion is to-day conscious of a certain impotency due to the fact that it is not confessionally geared in with the great ethical and scientific movements of our time. It does not "click" with the dominant aspirations which stir the hearts of modern men. The scientists and prophets have started spiritual movements with which the church, as such, has no organic connection. Christianity is operating with a cultus bequeathed to it from the past, a cultus created under a world view and a moral outlook which have been transformed by learning and ethical insight. When the prophet, standing in the pulpit, proclaims the new moral imperative, the worshipers are startled and shocked at his intrusion. He is preaching politics, they say, or science, or economics, or internationalism; we want our preacher to talk about religion! Their reaction is natural and inevitable. For these subjects are not religious; they are secular. But they must be made religious. And they can be made religious in only one way, that is by giving them a place in the collective expression of worship, so that they shall be not merely the utterance of a preacher, but the confessional utterance of the worshiping congregation itself.

The social gospel will always be an exotic gospel, until a cultus is created for it. It will be an impotent gospel until forms of worship emerge as carriers of social idealism. Indeed, the social gospel will never become a gospel at all until the activity of those who believe in it is employed to recreate the liturgies of religion so as to relate explicitly the social imperative to the will of God. The time has come to make the modern social imperatives at home in the church, to adorn them with the symbolic robes of worship, to give them wording in the forms of prayer, to interpret baptism and communion in the light of them, and to invest the very altar itself with the presence of a God whose gracious will applies not only to the inner life of those who worship, but to the commercial, political, industrial, international order of the world from whose teeming and complex life the worshiper has momentarily withdrawn only to return into it when he rises from his knees.

I am sure that you have felt the incongruity between the sermon of a modern prophetic preacher and the context of liturgy in which it was set. In my capacity as a sort of editorial circuit rider I preach in many churches all over the land, and I am depressingly struck with the fact that our churches are compelled to make the bricks of worship without the straw of any consistent liturgy. The situation is pathetic. Most of our Protestant denominations, reacting from a decadent priesthood and a decadent liturgy, flung all ceremony out of doors and sought to make religion support itself in terms of preaching alone. For a certain length of time religion did support itself in these terms. But to-day it will not do so. It is a fallacy to assume that it should do so. Religious ideas are not self-supporting. They depend for their support upon ceremony, that is, upon liturgy. The refinements of our theological thinking are not transferable to the lay mind of our time. That mind calls for a more gross, more objective, more visible setting forth of its deeper aspirations. It demands pageantry, drama, movement. It hungers for truth expressed in art, in music, in more sensuous forms than wordy arguments of a preacher. Or more precisely, it hungers to express *itself* in such forms.

We all feel the force of this modern demand. And we set to work to "enrich the service," as we say. How do we go about it? We gather a few scraps from the liturgy of the Anglican, and sometimes even from the Roman Catholic order, and patch them on to our traditional order of worship. We adopt a very holy tone, thinking that the more sepulchrally we speak the more we have "enriched" the service. The effect is to produce an "all-gone" feeling in the hearts of our congregations. The thing seems to be imposed upon them—it does not express any deeply felt impulse. Some of them protest; but others go along, under a self-depreciating sense that it is good, but that they haven't been educated up to it! But I say that this sort of thing is smothering our worship. It is incongruous with the actual moral convictions which we go to church to express and to renew. This unintelligent imitation of Anglican liturgy is positively pathetic. To look backward to the Anglican liturgy for the enrichment of our worship is to look in the wrong direction. That liturgy itself is in need of being made over. Its forms are no longer apropos. We have a new order of aspirations, a new body of convictions to-day. And these aspirations and convictions call for a new liturgy, a new pageantry, a new ceremonial, if we are to enlist the vital devotion of our communities in their worshipful expression.

It was a great mistake that nonconformity made when it threw liturgy away, and sought to rest religion upon ideas alone. It not only misread our human psychology by taking men as thinking beings in whom *ideas* are the dominant force, but it mistook the nature of religion itself. Man is not primarily or chiefly intellectual. His reason plays quite a subordinate part in the totality of his life. He lives in his imagination, in his feelings, much more than in his ideas. And this is no more true of the average man than of the most sophisticated of us. A gross social enterprise like religion requires that the imagination of the people shall be enlisted, refreshed, cleansed, and enriched by the act of worship. And this can be done only by liturgy. Ceremony is not an incident, an adjunct, an ornament in worship. It is inherent because religion is social, and there is no way by which a social group can express its social will, its common aspiration, except by ceremony. We need to say that to ourselves again and again until we grasp its significance. Ceremony *is*—I am giving a definition of it—

ceremony *is* a social group registering its will or its ideals. The ceremony may be very simple or very elaborate, but there is no other way by which the group as such may express itself.

But ceremony as such is not what we want. We want ceremony that fits the moral and spiritual facts. We will not be satisfied with any revival of ancient ceremonies. To the average mind they are likely to be unreal and foreign. Certain æsthetically erudite minds will perhaps appreciate them and enjoy them, but even so, it will not be because they are vital, but because they are quaint.

No, the revolution in our intellectual and moral outlook has been so radical and thorough that the times demand an equally radical and thorough reconstruction of our forms of worship. I will be the last to say that the traditional forms are valueless. Without doubt the instinct that prompted their formulation was a sound instinct, and we shall produce something that is only bizarre and ephemeral if we disregard the classic models through which the church has worshiped through the centuries. But whatever use we make of them must be based upon critical appreciation and intelligent adaptation to the ends they are presumed to serve.

Now, I say that this is the priestly function and responsibility of the minister in our day.

The task is essentially an artistic task. It is required that the priest shall be a constructive artist in the highest of all artistic activities, that of religious worship! The exercise of this function requires that the priest shall capture the idealism with which thinkers and prophets have charged our moral atmosphere and project this idealism in lofty dramatic forms through which the people may in their worship of God collectively participate in the celebration of life.

This, I know, is a tremendous undertaking. But it is time it was consciously begun. Every minister in his own church can make some humble and cautious beginning. I emphasize "humble" and "cautious" because I know how revolutionary the thing is, and how almost totally unprepared our ministers are to do even the first thing about it. I am not proposing something that we can do straightway. We shall lose more than we gain by precipitate and half-baked innovations. The true place to begin is in our seminaries. It is tragic that our ministers are sent forth with so little trained feeling for the art of worship. If I had my way, I would devote fully one half of the entire seminary course to the art and technique of liturgies. The trouble would be, of course, to find teachers who themselves understood the nature of this most holy of the arts. Liturgies now consist largely of giving the student a smattering of his teacher's erudition in historic liturgies. But historic liturgies will not do. Imitation of beautiful models will not do. We must construct new models, new pageantry, new hymns, new prayers, new anthems, new dramatizations in which, for example, the labor movement may be caught up in the embrace of religion, and the scientific movement, and the peace movement, and the civic conscience, and the community spirit, and every great human aspiration of our time. These must be given a wording, a ritual, a symbolism, which every human aspiration requires before it can be felt to be religious.

We may train our young ministers to the limit in theology, but they will go forth with a sense of preaching in a vacuum until they have been provided with a liturgy to match their theology. There is a wide chasm now between the two. The building of a bridge over this chasm is a priestly task. Already there are tokens that beginnings are being made. The new interest in ritualism is one token. Some say that this interest is born of ecclesiastical desperation. Having no gospel, it is argued, we are turning to liturgy. I dispute this interpretation. To me this movement is the timid beginning of the priestly spirit to function creatively. Experiments in worship are being carried on over a wide range. Many of these are pathetically crude; some are slavish and unimaginative imitations of ancient ritual; some are born of true creative instinct and are full of promise. The new hospitality to the drama in religion is bound to fructify in fresh modes of worship. New hymns are finding their way into favor, hymns which embody the new outlook. We do not have to think of God as a cosmic monarch in order to praise him. A God who works in the evolutionary process becomes the object of adoration, as in William DeWitt Hyde's hymn "Creation's Lord, we give thee thanks that this thy world is incomplete." The social gospel is working its way into song. The peace movement has a rapidly increasing number of magnificent hymns now available in the best books. Hymns are the first sign that a moral ideal is on the way to becoming religious. It will not be long before that ideal finds its way into ritual. After ritual the very structure of church organization will change to conform to the new outlook and the new imperative. We are in a decisive transition phase of Christian history. Formerly religion moved in a single hemisphere of life. But its prophets have discovered and are exploring a new hemisphere. Now its priests must arise and enter the new world of science and social vision and claim it all for God.

VI

THE PREACHER'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD

Louis C. Wright

Seven or eight years ago Dr. Ernest DeWitt Burton was saying repeatedly that the theological struggle of the approaching years would be waged around the idea of God. The clarity of his insight is attested by the ever-increasing volume of writing and discussion concerning this central idea of all theistic thinking—God. On the positive side the discussions range all the way from a stubborn clinging to traditional views of the nature of God, clear over to the merging of the whole objective idea of God into human value concepts. On the negative side there are all shades of criticism, from the confusion of a shattered orthodoxy clear over to the adolescent denials of outspoken atheism. The whole discussion surely registers a yearning need for a more adequate and more vital thought of God. As Walter M. Horton, of Oberlin, has recently stated, "The conventional and traditional ways of describing God no longer satisfy." This is the deepest religious disturbance of our time.

I am not setting myself the task of building the enlarged concept of God so much needed to-day. Many books and articles from many sources are even now wrestling boldly with this root problem of the human mind. Organized and divided religion is shaken from center to circumference, waiting for a bigger and more universal understanding of God for an enlarged world. But my concern here has to do with the problem of growing concepts for Christian preachers. For the preacher's concept of God has ever given authority to the religious message. To share the mental struggle of rethinking God; to hold permanent truth and let go outgrown expressions of that truth, to wean other minds from traditional thinking to spiritual pioneering, and yet to retain a warm, compelling sense of the living God—this is the preacher's assignment to-day.

Changing concepts of God, at the crises of religious development, are as old as religion itself. As Dr. G. A. J. Ross states, "The conception of God is not in stable equilibrium among us, but varies with the experience possessed and interpreted by the individual thinker on God." Preachers need to look straight at the fact that the idea of tribal deities grew into the idea of a God of the whole earth and that the idea of a magic-working God of early Israel became in the prophets a moral God. The God of the Law became "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Preachers must expect a demand for a bigger God in the bigger world which we have come to know. Professor Horton was looking straight into the heart of this new challenge for preachers to enlarge their thought of God when he declared, "The day is past when a preacher can get along without a theology." And a preacher's theology rests down upon his best thought of God. All else is secondary to this.

Oh, yes, preachers must be good organizers, know how to manipulate ecclesiastical machinery. The world-wide revolt against organized religion to-day does not mean that unorganized religion is the solution. But even though the institutional side of religion is perfected to the last item and preachers trained to ecclesiastical leadership, the whole business is headed for ultimate collapse if the compelling sense of a living God is lacking. We shall probably see this more clearly during the next ten years.

Likewise, a preacher must be a thinker and a teacher. Religion does not succeed by a brainless piety. But, unless the preacher's thinking is warmed and vitalized by a clear sense of God, he becomes a theoretical speculator dealing with religious topics instead of life.

Again, the preacher needs personal charm and capacity for leadership. But nothing gives a Christian preacher a charm so potent as being often consciously in the presence of God. One would rather give his congregation the feeling that he has just come out from thoughtful communion with God than to preach to them the most brilliant sermon that was ever uttered from human lips, if a vital sense of God is lacking. Valuable as all kinds of personal ability are for genuine success in the Christian ministry, these alone are pathetically inadequate. External success may be won for a season, but if a preacher is really to share the redemptive process, he must know God. For this there is no substitute. The tragedy of too many pulpits is the absence from the preacher's message of a living God and his frantic efforts to find a substitute.

The peculiar demand for a consciousness of God in the preaching of to-day, as over against yesterday, becomes the more clear when we look straight into the present religious situation. There is a kind of cycle of seasons in all religious progress. Some periods in religion are like the full flush of the summer season. Institutions thrive, revival forces work like leaven, growth and progress are on every hand. People live in the warm sunshine of religious reality. Songs are created. Missions thrive. Preaching is vital. People believe and bend life to their beliefs. Life abounds. It is the summer season of religion. Autumn regularly follows. It is a time of harvest. Adherents are increased. Orthodoxy is established and people know what they mean by Christian faith. The messages of prophets have been incorporated into the laws and life of the times. Religion becomes extensive. New organizations are built up. "The evangelization of the world in this generation" was the cry of harvest time. The Christian message seemed complete. The fruitage of past thinking and experience gave an authoritative message to the preacher. It was autumn and the time of harvest. But then comes winter. It seems ever to follow. Men try to keep what has been accumulated. They talk of the past seasons. Their religion is put in storage, and religious traditions are carefully guarded. People try to keep good rather than to grow goodness. If the stock diminishes and statistics fall, there is frantic appeal to ecclesiastical machinery to save the possessions of the church. Men grow hectic and blame each other for numerical losses. Some try to return to tradition, and others look for a new springtime. When winter seasons arrive in religion, some men are comfortable with the size of congregations, but others are worried, knowing that mere preservation cannot go on forever. But a fourth season always comes. Men take the sifted seed of past harvests and fling it again into the soil. Faith becomes daring. The elemental forces are again trusted—seed, soil, and God. Men dare to believe that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Instead of threshing old straw for a little grain they plant new crops and trust to the forces of God for increase. Are we not now passing from the winter season to the springtime? Are we not driven once more to the elemental principles of theistic faith? With the increasing futility of all our human programs for keeping religion aggressive, are we not being driven once more to a basic trust in God and to personal convictions born of that trust? The preacher's chief need is not reliance upon traditional views, nor the running of ecclesiastical machinery, nor bizarre programs, but upon a sense of the living God. Thus is religious revival born.

The securing of that new consciousness of God by the leaders of religion in any transition period is a spiritual adventure. Blunders are possible. But new continents await discovery. We are pushed off from familiar shores. Many a wistful heart yearns for an authoritative sense of God to-day. It is tragic for a preacher to be in mental and even moral confusion about his God at a time when he needs most to declare with prophetic certainty, "Thus saith the Lord."

Is there any way out of such a paradox? There is some encouragement in a growing company of Christian leaders, from all sects, who seem to be attaining a fresh confidence in God. Their convictions do not rest upon what has been told them from the past, but upon personal experiences of a present God. They speak with fresh authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees of all time. Their messages appeal to the human heart and not to traditional credos. Their religion seems real and their God alive. Such a God-consciousness is not dependent upon some chance discovery, but grows as a mighty conviction within reverent souls who wait before God and ponder deeply his will.

For myself, I have to draw some distinction between a kind of mystical consciousness of God and the mental concepts which are built up out of that consciousness. Some have been beautifully and potently aware of God who never built for themselves religious concepts. Probably many will never think of God as a problem, but trust him as given. I am sure I had a most valuable consciousness of my mother before I ever defined her motherhood or analyzed her mother love. I am sure my friendships have been made before I built definitions of friendship. And I am just as sure that I became conscious of God in a very helpful way long before my mind ever sought to define and explain him. Men of all ages seem aware of God. I am glad someone long ago put into the mouth of Jacob, "The Lord is in this place; and I knew it not," and of an experience attributed to Moses—"Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground." I am glad that Isaiah heard somehow the cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." So far as I can see, something of that kind of consciousness of God is normal for all reverent, godly men for all ages. For many the consciousness of God is exceedingly vivid, while their mental concepts are exceedingly vague.

But an unexamined and uncriticized sense of God often results in spiritual stagnation and error. All sorts of fanaticism and delusion spring from zeal without knowledge. The weird, wild, inane statements of those who have tried to tell their experiences of God without having put those experiences into clear ideas are especially familiar to those who attended old-fashioned prayer meetings. Preachers especially must lift the mystic experience of God into clear ideas.

Mysticism may be basic, but it is insufficient. Probably nothing is needed so much right now, over all the areas of Christian effort, as the rethinking of God against the backgrounds of our human world and its problems. For while our consciousness of God may abide, our ways of thinking of him, of preaching him, of describing him must change and grow. This will both freshen and stabilize the preacher's own faith.

It alone can answer the old human cry, "Show us the Father." To be sure, God must be more than definitions, but a God who is undefined results in mere religious sentimentalism or dogmatism.

Nevertheless, we cannot wait until our human thought of God is perfect before we have a vital religion or undertake to teach concerning him. Our concepts of God will never be final. The best we ever do is to obtain for ourselves and others workable concepts. We shall never crush God into exhaustive definitions. Always our thought of him must be open toward mystery and wonder. But we can build ideas for carrying our experience of God. I cannot escape the conviction that this is our high religious task to-day.

Many of our old concepts of God are no longer adequate as working tools. Too many go through the motions of a past religion, singing the songs of the fathers and repeating ready-made prayers without possessing a living, loving God of their own. Perhaps man's real consciousness of God is no less to-day than in former days. But our unsettled thinking about God makes that consciousness less confident, less definite, less comforting. The preacher can, if he will, so share the changed ways of thinking about God that they will warm and stabilize a personal consciousness of God. Is there any other source for acquiring and preaching a vital religion for to-day and to-morrow?

If the preacher's consciousness of God penetrates anything, anywhere, it will hold for everything and everywhere. No one will be able to reach out around God and inclose him in definitions. But our inquiring minds ever seek to build up working ideas of God valid for all the realms of human thought.

To-day the Christian preacher is called upon to state in reasoned terms his concept of God in at least three realms—the physical order, the moral order, and in the consciousness of Jesus. And he is not to be scared away from trusting his conscious experience of God and attempting to define that consciousness by the hostile claim that his concepts have no objective validity, being only wishful thinking or defense mechanism. For the validity of his consciousness of God he has the age-old, world-wide religious experience of all reverent souls. For the validity of his concepts, built up out of his world and his experience, he has the solid objective reference that tested views of God ever bend life upward and onward. If they do not give an exhaustive explanation of things as they are, they do provide for a healthy, positive, progressive life, through faith in the God of things as they are, rather than the blight of negations and materialism.

The idea of God has always attached to the cosmic order. Men have not only seen stars and flowers and storms, but God's stars and flowers and storms. The first story that we tell to children is of the world as God's world. And they understand. The human mind looks out upon its world and instinctively says "God," even before it explains him or his world. "The heavens declare the glory of God" to all of us long before we build concepts of that glory. The poetic and artistic within us give a haunting sense of God long before we go far in defining him. We all say with Wordsworth, "I have felt a Presence which disturbs me with the joy of elevated thought'' long before we analyze and rationalize that feeling. That consciousness cannot be brushed aside with a sneer nor as an abstract negation.

On the grounds of that consciousness of God in his world, preachers dare to proclaim the natural order as ultimately friendly, even in her darker moods. Take God out of that world and leave it one vast welter of blind forces, and the nerve of religion is cut. For it is not enough to preach a God of the human heart; we require a God of the whole world. I cannot see what is to save many from pessimism, and even suicide, if a God-consciousness is forced out of the ongoing of natural forces. Only as the preacher builds his concepts of God big enough for the twentieth-century world can he retain a real, vital consciousness of God and impart the same to others.

We are bound to believe a theistic interpretation of the cosmic order can be defended better than a nontheistic. But to do that the preacher must have more than poetic feeling. He must out-think the mechanist and the atheist as well as maintain an inarticulate consciousness of God. To-day the traditional idea of God must grow or go. Nontheistic interpretations of the world order may challenge and even shatter old concepts, but they do not dismiss the God-consciousness of men nor explain the world as self-sufficient. Theism may have baffling problems, but it works better than nontheistic thinking. Until some better explanation of the world and of human life is discovered than smuggling a blind urge into inanimate stuff, preachers had better go right on trusting their consciousness of God at the heart of things and seeking theistic interpretation of the world as a God's world.

A second realm which a preacher's consciousness of God must cover and into every nook of which it must enter, is the moral order. His convictions of moral righteousness are compelling only when they root in the very nature of God. The very foundations of life must be seen to be laid in the righteous will of a trustworthy God. Preachers are the agents of eternal goodness. For them, "the way of the transgressor is hard," and "the path of the righteous is as a dawning light" in the ultimate reckoning. Men may find their way into this order by the trial-and-error method, but they do not create that order. The world possesses a moral order quite as much as it does an order of the stars. It is not a mere accident that "selfishness spells extermination even among the birds and beasts." "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." There is a moral order which we find, but do not create.

The consciousness of God as moral judge is normal to man. Primitive men put the sanctions of God upon their customs and laws. We teach our children of a right and wrong in the very nature of things. A sense of guilt arises not from violating human opinions and judgments, but laws which are inherent in the very structure of life itself. Man has a consciousness of God as just and good. There never has been a moral order builded without the idea of God at its center. And something tremendous goes out of ethical preaching and ethical living when the sense of God becomes vague. Often the unexamined consciousness of God is little more than superstitious fear or the mere spawn of mysticism. But out of that consciousness men build their powerful customs and their binding laws, even though in ignorance those customs are harmful and the laws limit rather than release life.

Preachers can hardly appeal to their fellow men as free agents, rather than as mere cogs in a vast mechanism, unless they think of life as tied into a moral order which has validity beyond mere chance or human judgments. Not by the clever dodging of eternal law, but by gearing into it with increasing understanding do we discover the value of the good, the right, and the true. A preacher would better cling, as intelligently as he can, to his concepts of a God of right and wrong, even though others see only the human end of the moral order.

A third realm in which the preacher's consciousness of God finds reality is that whole vivid world which one discovers in the mind of Jesus. "God was in Christ." We find God there as nowhere else. The Christian preacher is not equipped until he has entered that world and explored it, following spiritual paths. Creep upon the inner consciousness of Jesus anywhere and there is a sense of God which every man craves. What he meant when he said "Father" opens up a world of God that neither the starry heavens nor the moral order reveals. We look into his consciousness of God and something calls to every man, saying, "Come, live my kind of a life, pray my kind of prayers, do my kind of work, know my kind of a God, be a son of God with me."

"To unravel the scroll of creation
One swift, sudden vision sufficed,
Every riddle of life worth the naming
Has found its interpreter—Christ."

However the picture of the Christ came to be drawn, as it is possessed by the best Christian thought, it conveys a bigger realization of God such as every man needs. What God was to the inner thought of Jesus is glimpsed elsewhere in the realm of persons, but nowhere else is the meaning of God so clear and satisfying. He leads us to the Father.

And we gain insights into his consciousness of God much as we gain insight into the inner minds of parents and friends and teachers. We can commune with others under spiritual laws and we can share with Jesus his thought of God. The good tidings of Jesus, in his life, teachings, and deeds, was chiefly this: a better understanding of God. The attentive still become newly aware of God in Christ and of a bigger, holier, more fatherly God than had ever been known before. He knew it would be true and we find it so; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The Christian preacher needs a consciousness of God in nature and in the moral order. But most of all he needs Jesus Christ's kind of consciousness and his clear concepts of God. And the trend of Christian living and thinking seems to be in the direction of this vital grasping of the idea of God. It is basic for Christian preaching to-day and to-morrow.

VII

THE PREACHER'S FIRST AND LAST WORD

Fred Winslow Adams

That first and last word: Why not be content with considering the preacher's first word, and let the last go? "Aye, there's the rub." There is always a danger that the preacher's first word may get detoured, stalled, or ditched, and never arrive at all. The best take-off from an airport is hopeless unless it is eventually followed up with a safe landing. The take-off and landing of the aviator I am interested in—aviator in the spiritual realm—is that of the apostle Paul. In one word he proclaimed the Good News of Jesus. What was it?

That word was to become the first word of the New Testament, if we consider the order in which the manuscripts were written, and also the last, if we consider the order in which the canon was finally arranged. You will find this word at the opening of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians. After what we would call the address, Paul begins, "Grace to you and peace." There is our word: "Grace." That word is found at the beginning of every letter Paul writes, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This first letter closes as it opens with the same word, "grace" —"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." And so closes every other letter Paul writes. But no New Testament letter written by other than Paul has that form of signature. Marcus D. Buell has pointed all of this out in his charming monograph on *The Autographs of Paul.* Paul's phrase of benediction came to linger so lovingly on preachers' lips that the last book of the New Testament—the Revelation—borrows it to seal the canon, and so the New Testament closes as it began—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Paul deliberately adopted this signature as a matter of identification. It was his sign manual, his trade mark, his proof of genuineness. So he declares as he brings to a close his second letter to the little church at Thessolonica: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

If Paul were broadcasting to-day, he would say, "This is the apostle Paul signing off—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you."

How many listen in to the rare music of "Roxy's Gang" on a Sunday evening? Do you know the most important moment in the whole program to Roxy? It is when he signs off with his sign manual. "Good night, pleasant dreams, and God bless you." In a machine and mechanistic age, here is a musical director, a theatrical manager, closing a concert after the manner of a church service, with a benediction—"Good night, pleasant dreams, and God bless you." And if you have heard Roxy say this benediction you have felt he was giving expression to a faith that was within him, and not uttering a platitude. So I think Paul's attest of genuineness to every letter he writes is something more than a sign manual.

There is an amplitude of meaning in this word "grace" that is implied in its Greek original *charis,* a richness of meaning suggestive of the richness of divine grace itself. It is well to think of this myriad-meaning word at the start. Grace in the theological sense might be called the loving favor of God. But grace is no less the enchanting beauty of God. Grace is beauty of form, line, movement, rhetoric, embellishment. This we may see in the petals of a rose, the form of a fleur-de-lis, the lift of a pine, the lilt of a song, the swing of a sentence. We see grace in sculpture, architecture, liturgy—an Apollo Belvidere, a Gothic spire, a Te Deum Laudamus. A grace note gives embellishment to music, three days of grace may save a lost note at a bank, and gracious words may give wings to a preacher's message to save a lost life or a lost cause for the kingdom of God. We ought to bear in mind something of this myriad meaning of God's loving favor and enchanting beauty whenever we use the phrase, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." For grace as applied to Jesus in the New Testament covers the entire scope of the charm, winsomeness, compassion, loving-kindness, and reverence in his Personality.

Paul's sign manual—"the grace"—is more than a signature—it is a symbol of his Christian faith. Instead of saying, "This is the sign in every letter I write," Paul might as accurately have said, "This is the sign of my gospel; this is what Jesus means to me." To Matthew, the Son of God meant the Messiah of his race; to Mark, the Heroic Wonder Worker; to Luke, the Radiant Saviour; to John, the Incarnate Word; but to Paul the Son of God was "the Gracious Lord of Life."

Recalling Emerson's phrase that every institution is the lengthened shadows of one man, we might say that Paul saw Judaism the lengthened shadow of Moses, and Christianity the lengthening shadow of Jesus. One is symbolized by Ten Words on Tables of Stone, the other by a Cross on Calvary. One emphasizes God's method of bringing man to the consciousness of sin; the other God moving toward man in redemption from sin. Theologically defined we see grace as the gift and loving favor of God in Jesus Christ. The recipient of this grace can say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. . . . For me to live is Christ," or with John Newton, sometime blasphemer and slave-driver, "I am not what I was; I am not what I should be; but, by the grace of God, I am what I am," or with Edith Cavell facing a firing squad: "Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness toward anyone." I was a student in this school when a Boston newspaper carried the paragraph: "This morning it was cold, damp, and rainy. Phillips Brooks walked through Newspaper Row, and all was sunshine." There walked the grace of God.

Paul's sign manual, "the grace," is not only a symbol of his faith, but a symbol of the declaration of that faith through preaching. Instead of saying, "This is the sign in every letter," Paul might as accurately have said: "This is the way I preach: though I speak with tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as a noisy gong or the clang of an old tin pan." If the preacher's message is the message of grace, then preaching itself is the glow of graciousness, the persuasion of graciousness. Saint Luke, you recall, in referring to Jesus' first sermon at Nazareth reported that "all bare witness to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Edmond Kean, the English actor, said that words once fell from Jesus' lips so full of tears that no voice could utter them. He referred to Jesus' words to publicans, sinners, outcasts, bootleggers, grafters: words which, if full of tears, yet had rainbows in the tears: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

How far short of the mark the modern preacher's words often fall, words that have lost their glow, words like those of Job, "darkening council without knowledge"; or as Hamlet tauntingly cried, "Words, words, words"; or as Jacques said of Touchstone, "words as dry as a remainder biscuit after a voyage." No wonder with some congregations at sermon time "all is quiet on the western front." There is no glow when the fire of conviction has burned out. Again the preacher may have hot words, too hot to be glowing—hasty, bitter, biting, complaining, intolerant, despondent, dyspeptic, hectic, hissing words.

Said the Hoosier:

> "Yes,—the bee sings, I confess it—
> Sweet as honey—Heaven bless it!—
> Yit he'd be a sweeter singer
> Ef he didn't have no stinger."[1]

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[1] From *Armazindy,* by James Whitcomb Riley. Copyright, 1894-1920. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

So would many a preacher.

You can assassinate character with a word. You can crumble a church by forgetting its virtues and magnifying its vices. You can clog the machinery of budding imagination with corrosive sentences. People are hungry for words of life and shall we throw them stones? In an English novel, *This Day's Madness,* a young girl burst upon her father in great excitement crying, "Oh, father, have you read Matthew Arnold's poem, 'The Forsaken Murman'?" Father was comfortably seated, reading his paper, and did not want to be disturbed. "Yes, yes," he answered, impatiently, and went on reading. "But, father!"—she saw it was no use. "That father was a murderer," says William Lyon Phelps. "He blew out the lamp of the girl's mind with the chill wind of indifference. Her soul was just being born, and he trampled on it because he wanted to read a newspaper." How different the attitude of John Wesley, when his traveling assistant was rude at the dinner table where they were guests on a Sunday noon. The young minister ungraciously lifted the hand of the host's daughter, who sat next him, to call Mr. Wesley's attention to the jeweled fingers in a day when Methodism banned such ornamentation. Sanctimoniously he bawled, "What do you think of that for a Methodist hand?" And Mr. Wesley, always a gentleman, courteously remarked, "I think it is a very beautiful hand." Thereby he rebuked his vulgar assistant, relieved his host from embarrassment, and won a convert.

Preaching is just that; it is graciousness—not turning on the heat, but maintaining the spiritual glow. The aim of preaching is to persuade. "I am persuaded," cries Paul. Preaching is persuasion of the truth of the loving favor of God in Jesus through the personality of the preacher. The supreme qualification of such preaching is spiritual glow.

That does not handicap the prophet's daring. It enhances it. The prophet's words must be fearless and challenging, but the abiding message of the greatest of them—Amos, Hosea, the Isaiahs, Jeremiah—was the message of a breaking heart. Who spoke more fearless and scathing words at times than the Prophet of Nazareth? Yet if you were to characterize Jesus' preaching, it would not be as a pronouncer of judgment, but as an announcer of good tidings; not in scathing scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, but in winsome story of a prodigal son or a good Samaritan. If you were to epitomize his preaching, would it not be in the Beatitudes, glowing with qualities of character that alone make the realization of a Sermon on the Mount possible?

A bishop of our church made protest to me over a sermon Harry Ward had preached in

New York in the midst of the World War. Professor Ward had spoken from the text, "God is love." I said, "Bishop, have you actually read the sermon, and is it not an inevitable implication of God's love?" But that was no sermon to preach at such a time! The logic is irresistible. Some things are forever incompatible with the loving favor of God, such as war as a means of settling disputes, and a social order that is not Christianized in justice and good will.

We are ambassadors of Christ, who was full of grace and truth. Whether it was his first word in the synagogue at Nazareth, where he declared the spirit of the Lord was upon him, or his last word on the cross, when he prayed, "Father, forgive them," he spoke the loving favor of God. Shakespeare challenges us to such graciousness of preaching when his exiled duke exclaims before a drawn sword, "Your gentleness shall force more than your force move us to gentleness." Lincoln was preaching greatly in his second inaugural, when he called the nation to manifest duty, "with malice toward none, with charity for all." Persuasion in preaching is the glow of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Never was the challenge greater or the opportunity greater for great preaching than this very hour.

One other thing I find in Paul's sign manual which glows in "the grace." It is the beauty and *far reach of his rhetoric, a beauty that was to flower in ritual. He turned a sentence that for enchanting loveliness can hardly be surpassed on the pages of the New Testament.* Little could Paul have dreamed, as he signed each letter with the word "grace," sometimes expanding the phrasing, as in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, to "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit," that he was giving the church its most beautiful piece of liturgy (with the single exception of the Lord's Prayer). Paul's "grace to you and peace" with which he begins his letters, and "the grace of our Lord Jesus," with which he closes them, have become the sunrise and sunset which synchronize Christian liturgy. In liturgical worship, whatever be the variance of form, whether the ritual be simple or elaborate, Orthodox, Roman or Protestant, Anglican, non-liturgical, or the Quaker ritual of silence, do we not approach the throne of grace as suppliants confessing our sins? And does not the act of worship come to crown in the benediction? And is not an order of worship in reality a liturgical unfolding of this word "grace," in an artistic manner, recapitulating Christian experience, both historically and personally?

The new movement toward greater beauty and reality in public worship, especially in non-liturgical churches, is bringing an added fulcrum to the preacher. To select arbitrarily a Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist Church, one might instance Doctor Gilkey's church at Springfield, Doctor Fosdick's on Riverside Drive, New York City, and Doctor McComb's Church of the Saviour, Cleveland. Here worship is inspiration to the preacher. The same thing may also be said for architecture. In fact, true Gothic architecture becomes as much a sign manual of the Christian faith as was Paul's signature. It was as inevitable a creation of Christianity as were Paul's letters. The real crusade of the thirteenth century was not rescuing the Holy Sepulcher from the infidel, but creating a spiritual architecture out of the pagan. The result was the most beautiful and awe-inspiring creation of the hand of man since time began. No one hesitates before a Gothic cathedral, church, or chapel, as to whether he may be looking upon a town hall, public library, art museum, or what not. He knows this is the house of God. And the moment he steps within he feels the sense of the Divine Presence. But we have churches from one end of this continent to the other that suggest anything but the Divine Presence. Some of them are more suggestive of the gingerbread man. But I think I am safe in saying that we have had more good churchly architecture—Colonial, Byzantine, and especially Gothic—in the last decade than in all our previous history.

If the preacher can build his sermon like a cathedral, with its fluted columns and groined arches arising more like the growth of a living thing than piled masonry, bringing a pervasive sense of wonder, mystery, and the manifold grace of God; if the preacher can project his theme like the Gothic arches over doors and windows, as hands lifted in prayer; if he can make his illustrations like the celestial fire of cathedral glass, responding to the sunshine, and reflecting the glory of God; if he can develop his sermon like a cathedral's open doors, veritable pathways of erring man to the altar of redeeming love; if, I say, the preacher can build his sermon like a cathedral, the symbol of the kingdom of God on earth, he shall know what it is to preach as an ambassador of Christ. Architecture, liturgy, preaching, here is a trinity no preacher may despise:

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek
after;
That I may . . . behold the beauty of the Lord, and
to inquire in his temple."

I am not blind to the dangers involved. Will the million-dollar churches of our industrial era preserve the beauty of brotherhood in our industrial life? Or will our magnificent churches of a machine age wash the red out of redemption? Will the æsthetics of our worship warp the ethics of our workshops? Will the American Gothic church enthrone and then imprison Christ in its chancel, and in chloroformed sanctity watch the rest of the world go by? Can the Protestant cathedral become the proponent of a Christian social order, where greed gives way to good will, and where men worship God in the beauty of pure motivation?

Here, indeed, is a challenge! It is not costly architecture and enrichment of worship services that we need. It is a conviction of the need of worship itself and of the adaptation of its ritual to the newer ideals of religion. We may well be thankful that so universal a voice as that of Doctor Fosdick is calling attention to the fact that the Protestant tradition has often reduced worship to a starvation diet, and that a few devotional exercises appended to a sermon will not serve the needs of the spiritual life. Doctor Fosdick has arranged to provide at the newly opened Riverside Church many varying types of worship services, but he calls upon the congregation assembling for public worship to come, not in the attitude of an audience assembled for a lecture or a concert, but in the attitude of doing something for themselves by which they may be carried out of themselves in the worship of God.

If as Protestants we are to attend church to worship God, why should we not make that act of public worship as ceremonially chaste and beautiful—yes, and as dramatic and colorful as a sunrise or sunset?

The first white man to look upon the waters at the foothills of the Adirondacks of what we now call Lake George, gave it a very different name. This Frenchman exclaimed, "La sacrament!" And so it was first christened, "The Lake of the Sacrament." God has covered the earth with such sacraments. Jesus, who revealed him, seemed ever fascinated by this fact. He saw his Father in the beauty of flowers at his feet, birds in the air, the far reaches of lake and field and sky. Shall we who seek God in the spirit of Jesus do less than make the architecture of his house spiritually ennobling, and the worship in his house ceremonially beautiful, that they may indeed become to all who gather there both sanctuary and sacrament? To create a liturgy that shall speak the language of this new age and interpret its social and liberal movement, without losing the lyric and mystical note is a priestly task that the modern preacher well may covet. The preacher of this new day must be not less a preacher, but more: a priest with creative imagination, a poet with glow, a pedagogue with conviction, a prophet with daring. He must persuade his listeners above all else, by the litany of sacrificial living, in the art of all arts, that of living together, and the architecture of all architecture, that of building the kingdom of God on earth.

And now the sermon ended, the priest stands before the people for the benediction. Can he feel something of the passion of Jesus that day in the synagogue at Nazareth when the Master said, "Now are these words fulfilled in your hearing"?

Robert Southey, in his *Life of Wesley,* says that the only time he ever met Mr. Wesley was at his father's house in Bristol. Southey draws the picture of Mr. Wesley picking up his little sister on the stair landing and kissing her, and then adds, "He put his hand on my head in a benediction that abides with me to this day."

Can the preacher transform the benediction from liturgy to life, so that something of the loving favor and enchanting beauty of the Master shall go from him as he says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you"? Can a benediction actually radiate this grace of Jesus, this manifold grace of the Babe of Bethlehem, the Neighbor of Nazareth, the Carpenter of Capernaum, the Genius of Galilee, the Champion of Childhood, the Friend of the Forsaken, the Prince of Peace? Can the benediction that came two thousand years ago from the light of his face, the lilt of his eye, the lift of his hand, the love in his voice, even the hem of his garment, come through your voice and mine as we speak those imperishable words of grace, mercy and peace? If not, we still need to kneel as suppliants at his feet. Then shall our first word find coronation in our last word, and the mystery of grace become a living reality in human hearts, even as Angela Morgan visions it in her lines—

"Something from above comes down
Grief or torment to allay:
Stills the traffic of the town,
Quells the riot of the day.

"Something delicate and rare
As the magic of a lyre—
Suddenly the day is fair
And our hearts are lit with fire."[1]

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[1] From "Something From Above Came Down." Copyright by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

VIII

THE PREACHER'S STINT

ALBERT E. DAY

AN ideal ministry requires an ideal manhood. The perfect fulfillment of the preaching function demands personality at its best—physical health, intellectual vigor, moral saintliness, spiritual genius. For that reason lectures on preaching are apt to be discouraging. The lecturer *must* extol the ideal. The hearer, who is usually the practitioner, is aware that he is very and inescapably unideal in one or more of the important phases of his own person. He may have a constant battle for health, which, however carefully and persistently waged, takes him into the pulpit sometimes with nerves that shake and a head that swims with weariness and weakness. He may spend the week pluming his intellectual wings with phrases and facts, poetry and prayer, for a Sabbath morning flight to the seventh heaven, only to be compelled to make a forced landing within the first five minutes after he arises to preach and to worry through the remainder of his time like a "player who struts and frets his one poor hour upon the stage" and then heartily wishes that he could be "heard and seen no more." He is undoubtedly a good man, but the better he is, the more certain is he to say to the lecturer or to anyone else who is interested, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but One." Sobered by the terrible responsibilities of the ministry, he makes such use of books and the Book, of meditation and prayer, as the pressure of the multitudinous and increasing claims of his parish permit, but he does not feel that he has attained the beatific vision which dissolves all doubts and entitles one to hold and use the keys of the kingdom of heaven. As he listens, therefore, to what men of genius have to say about preaching, he is tempted to wonder why he himself ever had the temerity to enter the ministry and to debate whether having made such a fateful mistake he ought not to "take up arms against the sea of troubles" arising out of his ineptitudes and end them all, not by a suicide, but by a resignation.

May I say very frankly—perhaps some will think too frankly—that though compelled at this moment to take the position of the lecturer, my sympathies are entirely with the hearer. Only by the most rigid discipline in far yesterdays did I keep fit for the great task, and arrive in the pulpit with some of that "brain well fed with rich red blood flowing up from a forceful body" which one of my distinguished predecessors on this platform commends as giving the Lord his best medium. I have not always succeeded in being a saint. I have tried hard to be good and think a moderate success has attended the effort, but have not been able at all times to maintain that unclouded vision which is assumed to be and undoubtedly is the requisite of a powerful pulpit. I have studied until these eyes were dimmed and prayed until my knees and heart were sore and have ministered in homes, small and great, at all hours of the day and night, and still have had to go into the pulpit with the specter of doubt dogging me and the fear of failure dancing before my eyes. Not mine has been the amazing versatility which seems to make it possible for some to wield that knowledge of history and science and psychology and sociology and literature and biblical research and religious education, without which it is assumed that no man can see the Lord or help others to see him. In fact, I blundered along at a rather mediocre pace until, by the grace of God or the blindness of a committee on ministerial supply, I was invited to a pulpit where there was some differentiation in ministerial labor and I could repeat and live that comforting phrase, "This one thing I do."

And, finally, there is that disturbing assurance from the lecture platform that the right kind of preacher will have a regular queue at his church doors twice on Sunday and at his study door on week-day afternoons or at any other time when he condescends to receive them. Well, this preacher knows what crowds are—for three years in a university pulpit, for seven years in a downtown church in an industrial center. But there have been other times when he preached, prayed, and moiled just as strenuously and when, a church committee coming to hear and observe, would have seemed like the sons of Jacob whom Pharaoh accused of coming to spy out the nakedness of the land; times when the doorbell of the study was ominously and distressingly unrung.

In a word, this preacher's life has run the gamut of joy and sorrow, of success and apparent defeat. This will, therefore, be no lecture from a pedestal. It is a word from a man who is still on his knees in humility before the biggest task in the world. It is not a display of infallible methods nor a report of unvarying victory—but a confession of a hope and a purpose which he trusts may bring hope to others conscious of their limitations and may inspire them anew with a purpose to which every capacity of their total selves may be unhesitatingly and gloriously dedicated.

This is no plea in abatement of a single ideal. In all things one must aim at the best—in personality, pulpit style, homiletic originality, saintliness. But some of these objectives are beyond the reach of the average minister at all times and elude the grasp even of the superior some of the time. There is, however, one crucial element in the task of preaching which is often missed and when missed frustrates even platform genius, but which is within the reach of all earnest souls and which if kept steadily at the center, will transform even the most common ministry of preaching and suffuse it with glory. That redemptive element will be found in the Christian answer to the question, What is the preacher set to accomplish? The most important thing any preacher has to do is to ask himself, "What is it that I am to achieve, if possible, by my preaching? What is to be my goal in the pulpit and in all that preparation for the pulpit which my study and my parish and my secret shrine afford me?"

There is in all of our dictionaries a good English word with a long and honorable history. It comes from the middle English period when its form was "stinten" or "stenten," and it meant "to cease," or "to cause to cease." Easy was the translation to the form "stint" and to the primary meaning "to bound, to confine, to restrain with certain limits." The logic of life compelled the adoption of the secondary meaning, "the quantity or task assigned." For if men are restrained within certain limits, it is usually not merely with the negative purpose of keeping them *from* doing certain things, but with the positive purpose of securing the doing of certain other things which particularly need doing, things which they can best do and which will be done better if the attention is centered upon them. The dictionary illustration of this meaning is the simple sentence, "His stint is to milk the cows." It is a perfect illustration. The farm hand is not set to milk the cows merely to keep him from chasing the family cat, for example, but, rather, (1) because the milking needs to be done, else the cows will go dry and the family drier; (2) because he can milk more effectively perhaps than he can build fires or husk corn; (3) because milking is better done if it becomes a sort of specialty. It is no job for the amateur or the dabbler, especially in fly-time.

But now so accurate a word as "stint" should not be relegated to the cowshed. It really is at home in every realm where men seek high achievement. Only those who "confine themselves," "restrain themselves within certain limits," can really perform "the task assigned." The first canon of art is limitation. Great pictures and great poetry and great drama are made by what has been omitted quite as much as by what has been included. And great painters, poets, and dramatists have been men who have shut themselves *in* from many entrancing fields and *up* to one supreme passion. "The born poet," says Flaubert, "is for me a priest; as soon as he puts on the priestly garment, he should quit his family forever."[1] Some kind of quitting enters into the life of all greatness, out of the pulpit and in. No sciolist ever becomes a scientist, no dabbler a dramatist, no potterer a poet. Trader Horn enunciated more wisdom than he ever dreamed in those familiar words of his, "You can sure stand on your own spear when you've learned the word good-by and say it clear." To know when to say and how to say *that* is the indispensable prelude to the joy of saying "Hello" to great achievements in any realm.

"Stint," therefore, is not a strained word when applied to the preacher. It has value for the complexities of the modern pulpit as well as for the simplicities of rural life. It is wisdom for the man who milks cows and for the man who is set to provide the sincere milk of the Word.

What is the preacher's stint? To usher in the kingdom of God. I do not see how anyone can read the words of Jesus and arrive at any other conclusion.

What is that Kingdom? Individualists and socialists have waxed warm in debate over the interpretation of those words. The result has been sometimes illuminating, sometimes only a darkening of counsel. There is an interpretation which includes all the values for which socialist and individualist alike have argued: "The new moral order when all human wills would be reconciled to the will of God."[2] That is the summary of Professor Scott, and I know no better anywhere.

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[1] Correspondence, Vol. II, p. 232.

And how is this Kingdom to come? Undoubtedly, here was the great struggle in the life of Jesus. It is epitomized and dramatized for us in the story of the temptation, though I think we are mistaken if we assume that the struggle was one sharp battle in the rough, lonely highlands of Judæa, culminating in one decisive, final victory. Over and over again it repeated itself, as apparent failure and the hostility of the crowd impelled him to ask whether he had not made a mistake, pursued the wrong track, trusted his cause to faulty methods. What else can be the meaning of the lonely nights of prayer; the long retirement into the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon; the sharp answer to Simon, "Get thee behind me, Satan; . . . thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," as if he was repulsing a suggestion which had cut so close to an inner bewilderment that the only way he could retain his poise was to refuse it permission even to linger on the threshold of his mind? Not once, but many times did the Master Preacher, keeping one fixed goal in mind, have to make that decision as to method which the one dramatic summary known as the temptation brings vividly before us. "Command that these stones be made bread." The way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Rations and redemption are inseparable. "Cast thyself down." Do something spectacular. Capture attention. Dazzle men into the arms of God. "Bow down and worship me." Be a good fellow. Beguile the time by looking like the time. Tread on no toes and you will soon have every foot on your trail! Here are epitomized the great choices which confronted Jesus. "Bring in the Kingdom! Surely! But you must first capture the human heart, and there are only three avenues to that citadel—the promise of prosperity, the supply of the daily thrill, the elegant and discriminating conformity." But from them all, from bread-making and breath-taking and breeze-catching, Jesus resolutely turned away and committed the success of his adventure to the transforming power of the word uttered by a heart which knew how to trust God without any spectacular evidence of his care and which worshiped neither wealth nor power, but God alone. Believing, as he evidently did, that the coming of the Kingdom was dependent upon the divine initiative, he knew that it also awaited human co-operation. God is ready to reign in the beauty of his holiness, but will not reign until man accepts that rule with a whole heart. God is no usurper; he mounts the throne only upon invitation. The great task, therefore, is to help men to fall in love with God so that his rule is welcomed with the whole heart. Jesus understood, as many of his followers have failed once and again to understand, that such a result cannot be achieved by the lure of material rewards, by the deeds which awe, but do not alter the mind, by the compromises which flatter and seem to render men pliable, but which are incapable of bringing repentance and regeneration. If men are to accept the rule of God, their thought-patterns must be changed, their emotions must be hitched up to different ideas. Jesus, therefore, renounced the methods which could not produce such inner transformations and gave himself to the kind of teaching which he believed capable of renewing the minds of his hearers, so that knowing God and his love and the wisdom of the divine will for human life, they would lift up the everlasting doors and bid the King of Glory come in.

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[2] *The Gospel and Its Tributaries.*

This, therefore, is Jesus' conception of the mission of the pulpit, to bring in the kingdom of God. And this was the method for the sake of which he renounced every other means which hope and fear alike suggested as an ally of the Kingdom, namely, teaching—just teaching; that was all. There came a time when he had to exchange a pulpit for a cross. But that cross was the climax of a matchless series of lessons on the love of God. He taught as long as his lips could frame a worthy phrase, and when the last word died away amid the awful stillness of that tragic twilight, his life and death became the Ultimate Word. Calvary was not a deed done to move God to take pity on men. It was the Great Teacher's last and sublimest utterance to man about the everlasting pity and patience of God. He who began on the mount of beatitudes his ministry of teaching ended as he began—a teacher. The very redemption for which creation groaned and travailed and which it was his passion to provide, was redemption by truth, taught by lips and life and love even unto death!

II

This does not seem to have brought us very far, does it? What could be more commonplace than a declaration that our business as conceived by Jesus is to bring in the kingdom of God by teaching! Yet, I venture, the adequate recognition of the complete significance of that conception of the mission of preaching would transform many a ministry in America. I can think of nothing which I would rather have seize upon the convictions of a boy of mine who hoped to enter the service of the church.

Apparent as this simply stated goal seems to be, it has not yet become conspicuous, let alone commanding in the ministerial consciousness of the church. Passing by those unfortunates who seem to conceive the pulpit chiefly as a not too painful way of earning a living or as an entry into desirable social circles, or as a base from which to launch profitable lecture tours among dinner clubs and women's clubs and other aggregations of the *genus homo* who in lieu of anything better to do when they get together are willing to appear to watch the fervent gushings of some oratorical geyser, one is compelled to recognize the belittling influence of other objectives on the art of preaching. Some are out for a crowd. Their greatest energy is consumed not in the discovery of truth which makes men free but in the invention of devices which make men gape and gossip and giggle and go. They fill their bulletin boards with the themes and their mouths with the utterances which will enable them to compete with Billie Dove and Babe Ruth and "Scarlet Sister Mary" and other rivals for the attention of a generation of overstimulated nerves, overstuffed livers, and undernourished brains. They are often good men, earnest men, even brilliant men. But something has happened sometime, somewhere to convince them that the man who preaches to anything less than crowded pews is a failure, and in their estimation such failure is not merely a shame but a sin.

Others conceive it their mission to speak comfortably to Jerusalem. Life is hard at best and the preacher has no business making it any harder. So they turn away from all problems, eschew all serious discussions, avoid everything which sounds like a challenge or rebuke and administer liberal Sabbath doses of spiritual aspirin for the leg-aches of weary social climbers and the headaches of tired business men. I heard one such the other day. He came a much-heralded name. He bore an ingratiating manner. His phrases ran as trippingly as rimes of Edgar Guest. He had a great theme. When he sat down after forty-five minutes, everybody was pleased, pleased with the preacher, with themselves, with their neighbors, and apparently with God—the kind of a God the preacher heralded. But not a serious question had been raised or answered, not one moral searchlight had been thrown into the surrounding darkness of that community, not a word lifted in behalf of the men, women, and children whom a complacent industrialism had trodden into the dust in order that those who were present might live amid the shaded loveliness of palatial country estates.

The justification of some particular type of thinking—scientific or philosophical or historical—seems to be the chief burden of other homiletic song. One man constitutes himself an Apostle of Emergent Evolution. Another is a convinced disciple of Behaviorism and his audiences are regaled with the sayings, not of John Zebedee but of John Watson. The "J" and "E" and "Q" of historical criticism get a great deal more attention than the Alpha and Omega of Revelation. At best people's minds are informed; at the worst, deformed; almost never transformed.

Perhaps most ubiquitous and iniquitous of all is the preaching put at the service of an institution. A caustic sermon-taster, writing in one of our best magazines, said that there is a whole class of preachers whose conclusions you can predict as soon as they announce a text. "It does not matter where or with what subject they begin, they are sure to insist that the irresistible deduction of all they have to say is that everybody ought to join the church and support all its agencies." It is difficult to believe that preaching ever becomes quite so woodenly institutionalized as that, but it is not difficult to recognize the truth underlying the hyperbole. Many pulpits see almost everything from the stand-point of its effect upon the church. Widely separated questions such as marriage and Sunday movies, birth control and church federation, prohibition and child labor, are almost wholly judged by their effect upon this one institution and exalted to homiletic heaven or dismissed to the preacher's hell in accordance with that judgment.

Nor can this hurried summary close without a recognition that there is quite a considerable group in America who conceive it the only task of the pulpit to bear witness to certain revealed truth. That truth is to accomplish little in the way of social regeneration, but merely to justify God after awhile in descending in wrath and power irresistible to wipe out the unregenerate mass and to set up his everlasting kingdom—"What is the appointed charge of the church in the world?" asks Campbell Morgan. "It is that of evangelizing the world, not converting it!"[3]

But suppose, now, that we as preachers began to recognize that our stint is to do what we can by teaching to bring in the kingdom of God! It would immediately redeem us from the tyranny of crowds. Of course we should want people—but people who came to hear transforming truth, not throngs lured by some popular device and in a mood which makes them uninterested in and impervious to the truth. Jesus had crowds once, but as he clung steadily to his God-given mission he saw those crowds melt away until the thousands became hundreds and the hundreds fifties and the fifties, ten. And puzzled, almost frightened, he turned to the little handful who were left saying, "Will ye also go away?" But that Teacher laying the foundations of eternal truth in the hearts of that little group did more for the Kingdom than is being done by popular orators who have thousands come and crane and laugh and applaud, beholding themselves in the glass of humorous and sentimental eloquence, and departing forget straightway what manner of folk they are. I saw a letter written a little while ago by one preacher who was once a crowd seeker and crowd getter but has come to a new recognition of the uniqueness of his task. "I am convinced," he wrote, "that the church has been too long interested in quantity production. The result is we have filled our pews and rosters with people who are interested only in the same thing which increases box-office sales at theaters and which led the old Greeks into the market place —merely the promise of novelty and thrills. . . . I am determined to have nothing to do with ballyhoo of any sort, with devices that put one into competition with the crowd catchers. I do not know just where such a program is going to take me. Sometimes the horizon is very dark save for the light which shines from a distant cross. At any rate I am determined to be a fool for Christ's sake if necessary." No one can predict just what will happen to such a man. But certainly his emancipation from the pursuit of numbers will set him free to seek souls, whether they swarm or are solitary. And that is his chief business!

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[3] *Parables of the Kingdom.*

That there is a ministry of comfort sadly needed every preacher who is at the same time a human being soon discovers. Most of those in our congregation who have reached maturity are carrying heavy burdens of fear and anxiety, of disappointment and loneliness, and unless they hear from us the word of consolation and hope, they may be crushed beneath life's staggering load. But even *they* will find permanent escape only as they are brought into harmony with the will of God. And when we recognize that most of the fears and worries and isolations of the world are born out of "man's inhumanity to man" in industry and commerce, in political and domestic life, then it immediately becomes apparent that the truest ministry of comfort is that which seeks to bring all men under the sway of God's rule of sacrificial love. The preacher who awakes a new ideal of honesty and who converts the thieves along the Jericho road is doing vastly more for the comfort of society than the pulpit grandmother who spends the whole time carrying bandages and liniment to those who are suffering from bandit activities. The prophet, after all, is the best physician. The challenger may disturb many complacencies and send men away from church in a ruffled mood, but he also inaugurates that godly sorrow which worketh repentance, not to be repented of.

This conception of the pulpit's task will redeem the preacher from an overabsorption in the latest hypotheses of science and the newest theories of philosophy. He will not be less mentally awake to the thought currents of the day but he will recognize that they are not his stock in trade. He is the teacher of the blessed secrets of the life hid with Christ in God, the steward of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. While scientists experiment and philosophers debate he has something to communicate which has long passed the period of experiment and debate and for which the hungry heart of humanity is waiting. Did you by any chance see that report of the Star Island Unitarian Summer Conference, appearing in the Christian Century over the signature of John Clarence Petrie, once a Roman Catholic priest but now a minister of the Unitarian communion? One of the main features of that conference was a retreat led by the Rev. William Lawrence Sullivan, who too had marched under the banner of Roman Catholicism and had been a Paulist missionary. Doctor Sullivan never once mentioned the philosophical-theological debate which had been raging in the Unitarian fold. "Out of the depths of his spiritual experience this man spoke the things of faith. God and Christ and the Bible and the soul of man in its battle with the forces of evil—these were never argued about, but before the end of the week they had become living realities." Then came the final day when ministers arose to tell what had happened to them during the retreat. All said they had lived a week in the presence of God, and so living they made a discovery and came to a holy resolution. "Testimony was universal," writes Petrie, "that Unitarian ministers had been lecturing instead of preaching and the resolutions were all to the effect that this must stop." That is a discovery which needs to be made and a resolution which must be born in Methodism as well as Unitarianism. Both events are likely to happen when preachers come face to face with the ideal of Jesus as reported in the New Testament or incarnate in a living soul who has been keeping spiritual company with him.

Not less will the clear mind of Jesus about our task deliver us from that worst of all banalities, institutional preaching. Not the church but humanity will become our goal. The institution will be glorified when it truly serves, but unhesitatingly challenged when it exploits. No salary or promise of promotion will ever command our pulpit gifts in the interests of denominational rivalries, or in the exaltation of an officialism which, blinded by a passion for power, would keep alive churches and church agencies which ought to be quietly etherized and buried. Neither will our judgments on men and issues in political and economic and social and international life be blighted by a perpetual reference to their relation to the institution which we happen to be serving. Some preaching does temporarily hamper institutions by hurting collections. When ministers try to remold thought-patterns, and hitch emotions to the ideals of the kingdom of God, millionaires ever and anon demonstrate anew that they welcome the process quite as little as the proverbial camel might rejoice at the attempt to drag him through the needle's eye. But such use of the holy office does help to awaken conscience in others who are still *owners* and not *owned,* and it does inspire those reorganizations which are often necessary if institutions are to become allies of the kingdom of God.

And, of course, this conception of the preacher's goal delivers one entirely from the transcendental quietism which threatens to creep in upon American life from Barthian circles abroad and which is utterly disconsolate of human effort as it awaits for a divine apocalypse. If God has summoned us up by preaching to lay the foundation of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men, then we are not mere loud speakers who have done their work when they have made it possible for the last man on earth to hear the gospel story. We are colaborers with God, and God waits upon our efficiency quite as much as we wait upon his revelation. There is an urgency upon us which compels us to exert ourselves, not merely that a sacred deposit be passed on but that we discover its inexhaustible implications, pioneer its new and ever-enlarging applications and employ those methods which shall give it access to the hearts of men and redemptive power in all their relations one with another.

III

The preacher's stint, intelligently and wholeheartedly accepted, not only will shut him away from perilous diversions and perversions, but will shut him up to tasks which he can best do and which ought to become his divine specialty. It is the paradox of the stint that while it narrows, it broadens; while it limits, it emancipates. Amazingly clear become the major interests which demand and deserve attention. As plain as day dawns a career in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, ought not to get lost.

Evident are the factors which must be mastered if the divine goal is to be reached. Briefly, then, what will be the character of the pulpit dominated by such a fixed purpose?

It will set itself to know psychology. Compelled to influence human behavior, how can it hope to fulfill its mission unless aware of what science has revealed concerning the motives which determine conduct? "Not by talking vaguely about goals and ideals," says Professor Overstreet, "but by finding out quite specifically what methods are to be employed," are we to capture attention, win regard, induce men and women to think and act along with us. The preacher who is ignorant of psychology is as pitiable and useless and almost as dangerous as a physician who has a plentiful supply of costly drugs on hand, but who hasn't the slightest idea of the reactions which those drugs produce in the human system. He will only aggravate the ills he seeks to cure, induce tempers which ought never to have arisen and lose to secularism, that growing graveyard where preachers' mistakes are buried, many who might have been walking the ways of the Kingdom in spiritual health and vigor.

Educational psychology, more commonly known as pedagogy, has much to offer the preacher. Especially significant is its emphasis upon the exploration of the mind of the pupil as an indispensable requisite of successful teaching. In the school the teacher has resort to the written test or the oral quiz or the class discussion as the means of discovering the experiential background of the pupil. But however the exploration is made, he does not, unless he is a timeserving dub, attempt to present new material until he knows enough of the pupil's experience to make the connection of the new and the strange with the old and familiar. Here is the significance of the much despised or much wasted pastoral visitation and here is the key to its conduct. Of the ringing of many bells and the shaking of many hands there is no end, and much small talk is a weariness to the flesh. But a recognition of the opportunity which conscientious, intelligent pastoral calling offers for an exploration of the minds of the parish would save many pulpits from the oratory which is sounding brass and clanging cymbal and would equip preachers with the information without which no successful ministry of teaching is possible.

Sociology has much to say to the preacher. It reveals some of the forces which contend with him for the mastery of the souls of men. It also indicates a broad field of complex human relationships which he must help people see in terms of the will of God if the kingdom of God is ever to come in their lives. A recent writer in a caustic criticism of my home city said: "It is a bitter saying among the Pittsburgh minority that what the city needs is a few first-class funerals. I am not savage enough to subscribe to that formula. But Pittsburgh does need one large and comprehensive funeral—it needs to bury John Calvin so deep that he will never get up again." It is because so many preachers and laymen in the ecclesiastical descent of John Calvin and of John Wesley have never guessed that religion has anything to do with sociology and kindred fields that so much preaching and listening have made no contribution to the kingdom of God. A brilliant Jewish rabbi, one of my very best friends, said to me the other day when we were facing and trying to end a social situation which was inflicting unspeakable hurt upon thousands of our fellow citizens, "Day, if the Christian pulpits of Pittsburgh had been at their business, we would not have such a human tragedy on our hands."

And, finally, the preacher who accepts this limiting but emancipating ideal will need to keep alive his mystical as well as his moral fellowship with the Divine. I close with a searching word from Evelyn Underhill: "You are sent to a world full of tortured, twisted, driven souls. . . . How are you going to show these souls, who need it so dreadfully, the joy and the delightfulness of God and the surrender to God unless you have it yourself?" "A shallow religiousness, the tendency to be content with a bright, ethical piety wrongly called practical Christianity, a nice brightly varnished this-world faith, seems to me to be one of the ruling defects of institutional religion at the present time. . . . It will only be checked if and in so far as the clergy are themselves real men of prayer, learning to know at first hand and more deeply—and so more and more humbly—the ineffable realities to which they have given their lives."[4]

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[4] *Concerning the Inner Life.* E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc.

IX

PLOWING UNDER

DAN B. BRUMMITT

ONE of the few things that I remember about farming is that the prudent agriculturist now and then puts in two sorts of crops which are not expected to produce large immediate results. Their gains will be indirect, remote, and spread over considerable periods of time.

This is notably true of the cover crop, grown primarily to protect the ground during the time outside the main-crop season, and to enrich the soil when it is plowed under. The catch crop may have a small amount of immediate profit, though even this also is intended to be a part of a farm policy which looks far into the future for some of its largest returns.

For many years I had taken for granted that most preachers knew and loved those great books which everybody is assumed to have read. But in the past five years I have conducted three courses with ministers in and out of the seminary, and my eyes have been opened.

My experience suggests that the average young minister is less than adequately conversant with the books of accepted cultural significance; indeed, he has scarcely nodding acquaintance with even the most obvious of them.

It is to such improvident preachers that one is fairly driven to say: "Try a spell of plowing under. Get the trick of reading for its own sake. Squander some of your not too precious hours in the company of writers who may never make you reach for your notebook to set down an idea or an illustration for next Sunday. Free yourself from the Puritan superstition that reading which is not for immediate profit is no more than a depraved idling away of God-given time."

In the ministry, as in all other callings, a minority of practitioners will be found to whom such advice would be offensive, as an aspersion of their sense of values. But you who have watched as I have watched the sales of a certain type of book for preachers, sales which reflect alike the commercial shrewdness of their vendors and the mental poverty of their buyers, may be patient while I suggest a regimen to help preachers win their independence from canned topical plums and homiletical wooden nutmegs.

It is fatal to assume that people are so eager to respond that they will accept the wares we offer, no matter how they are presented. Many years ago the late W. L. Watkinson told the students of Garrett Biblical Institute that they might profitably emulate the concentration policy of a certain maker of talcum powder, who advertised, "We couldn't improve the powder, so we improved the box."

And, the less urgent the public's conscious need, the more imperative is the task of capturing its interest. As our homiletics teachers have told us, the preacher is to warn, persuade, convict, enlist, comfort, strengthen, instruct, encourage. In some of these employments he may have no need to win his people's attention; but in others he will make no headway until he can provoke an interest which is dormant or otherwise engaged.

The preacher of to-day is a minister to his own definite group of people, and he must study their instincts, habits, strength, beauty, ugliness, hopes, fears, and vaguest reachings after God. But these people are not the only ones who have suffered. Others have rejoiced. Love has come to other men and women; hatred has seared their souls, hope has energized, the quest of God has by turns allured and dismayed, dread has unnerved, every question and every passion, good and evil, has been asked and known by the unnumbered millions of the past. The preacher is working directly with the experiences of a hundred or a thousand men and women, but those experiences have been endlessly repeated in the stream of human life that has been flowing through ten thousand years of recorded time.

Paul told Timothy to give attention to reading, meaning first of all, no doubt, Scripture reading; and if we are to take his instruction on this point as inspired, we may temper it by remembering that Paul practiced his own command in a broad and catholic fashion. He could quote a Cretan prophet and an Athenian poet; when he said "Evil communications corrupt good manners," he was borrowing, whether consciously or no, from a comedy by Menander. Many passages in his sermons and letters indicate that he read as widely as he could, and with the fruits thereof enriched his preaching. It is this Paul whom we may take as authority. We might take John Wesley also, who, though he loved to call himself a man of one book, not only read everything he could lay his hands on, but laid hands on much of it in the most literal sense, for no man of his time was so assiduous an adapter and re-issuer of other men's words.

Fortunately for the preacher, the medium of his preaching is a language which is written as well as spoken. In the long interval between Homer and John Masefield every great and trivial motion of the human spirit has been put into written and printed words, many of them noble and memorable words, and now to be had in our own language in larger abundance and at smaller cost than in any day since the vagrant bard sang by the fire in the castle hall the stories of the past, and earned his supper and his bed of straw.

The easiest and most interesting of all homiletic assertions to prove is that which was so constantly on the lips of Jesus: "It is like." Experience increasingly convinces us that there are few unique adventures of the soul.

The preacher who thinks to do without this legacy from other days is like an insurance agent who scorns the tables of mortality expectation or the premium rates based thereon; he is like the surgeon who ignores the clinic and the records of other surgeons' work.

To change the figure for a moment, this is true of the commonwealth of books, that any newcomer may attain to citizenship therein much more swiftly and at less cost than any other sovereign state allows. In truth, he is his own court of naturalization; the moment he is able to appraise and use his franchise he is a freeman of the land.

And I hold, as one of the self-verifying certainties of this book world, that, once initiated, your true booklover must inevitably plan his own excursions, and from the start will contrive to find his own way about. He may and should continue to accept counsel, not without due humility and gratitude, and to follow it as seems to him prudent. But love, whether of maidens or of books, is ever impatient of authority.

Reading, like kissing, goes by favor—as it should.

All that is needed at this moment is to point the way for a little distance into an enchanted land. But that may be no small service, if the reader who knows his need is willing to accept the proffered help. For the land of books is an enchanted land. No true preacher may scorn its bread-and-butter values, but if he come to it for bread-and-butter usefulness alone, for quick sermon-stuff and clever tags of unrelated thoughts, snappy paragraphs and showy illustrations, his punishment will be that he will get what he came for—and nothing over! But if he yields himself to the potent spell of the land, he will many times forget what it was in his preacher task that set him to searching; and he will wander widely, without consciously choosing a destination, through its ever-changing scenery. And his reward shall be that the bread-and-butter stuff which he forgot shall nevertheless be his. But he will have it, not as he expected before the spell came over him; it will be richer, more usable, more apt to his need, with every excursion he makes into the alluring places as yet unexplored.

Much of the preacher's reading will be done with reference to results hoped for in a future which all too rapidly is becoming the present. He must consider next Sunday's sermon, and the following Sunday and all of the other Sundays between now and vacation. Such reading he cannot forego, and at the peril of his preaching soul he will neglect it or skimp it.

Nevertheless, when he has done this, and when he has attended to the multitudinous details and demands of his pastoral office, he will somehow find time for the growing of these other crops, the catch crop and the cover crop, whose purpose is not an immediate return in usable knowledge and ideas, but the fructifying of all his future ministry.

For the sake of definiteness, let me put myself in the place of the preacher who, proposing to grow a crop for plowing under, is making certain resolutions to that end.

"In my reading which is not for immediate public use," he says to himself, "I will highly discourage any tendency I find in myself to become a pulpit authority on any name, great or small, of the literary world. I will not so saturate myself in Browning or Tolstoy or Eddie Guest or William James or Walt Whitman as to weary my people with the facility and especially the frequency of my references to these men's words." It is possible for hearers to become tired of Jeans and Eddington and, indeed, even of Shakespeare.

A few summers ago the usual Shakespearean festival at Stratford was closing. The actors, drawn from many parts of the world, were going away, uplifted by the privilege which had been theirs of playing Shakespearean rôles in Shakespeare's own town. The audiences had scattered, after their various thrills over their share in the celebration from the other side of the footlights. Only one man was staying behind—the property man of Stratford theater. Whatever others felt, he was satiated with Shakespeare, and one of the lingering members of the last play's cast observed him as he paused before a bust of the bard. "Props," shaking his fist under the nose of this counterfeit presentment, was heard to say in tones of deep disgust, "I'll teach you to write plays!"

Some of the congregations sitting under certain preachers might be pardoned if they were caught shaking their fists under the photograph of a beloved pastor and saying, "I'll teach you to quote Browning!"

"I will remember in this sort of reading," says my resolving preacher, "that I have the opportunity to become the literary leader of my people." The old distinction, dimmed for a generation or two, is coming back. Once the preacher was the cleric, the only writer in the parish. He was the parson, because he was the truly literate person.

When all gained the ability to read and write, his distinction as the cleric diminished, and, when all could go to school to other teachers, his dignity as the dominie suffered an eclipse.

But now, because to-day's education for most people is becoming increasingly a thing of bread and butter, of preparation for specific occupations, the preacher may find in his congregation many people who, though they have degrees of one sort or another, are quite obviously possessors of no more than a one-sided and highly specialized education. So the preacher may know himself once again, if not as the only educated individual in the parish, yet as the most liberally developed teacher and scholar, the one genuine literate person among many sorts of experts.

This will be to him a great advantage; the range of his reading may be so wide and the range of his interests so broad that every specialist in his parish will look to him for guidance in every other avenue of the truly educated man's activities except his own narrowed byway.

"I will become a child again," my preacher resolves, "and I will remember, and so far as I have opportunity I will reread those books which from time to time in the very beginnings of my reading life touched off in me something new, something eagerly and quickly responsive. So I will make the acquaintance once more of Oliver Twist and Ivanhoe and Tom Sawyer and

Lorna Doone and Jean Valjean and The Virginian.

"I will find time to browse again among the masterpieces which were almost spoiled for me in my earlier acquaintance with them, because they were set as tasks by unimaginative schoolmasters. I will invite once more that first fine, careless rapture of discovery which comes to all of us once or twice in our youth, and we are one with Keats in saying, 'Then felt I like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken.'"

Again resolving, "I will take all the consequences—scientific, theological, human—of whatever reading I do. This is a resolution full of risk, but the risk must be taken. I will let nature take its course, and will not ask it to stop, nor insist that it shall change its processes, the moment it has served my little purpose. The very glasses by which I am able to read this page and to see my familiar surroundings were prescribed by the oculist and ground by the optician in accordance with certain facts of light. I accept the spectacles, and I am therefore bound to accept the spectacle which the starry heavens presents, and to believe that in their remotest galaxies they also are governed by the same immutable laws.

"I will not be so provincial that the ether waves would mock my narrowness if I should let it crop up the moment that I tune out my radio set. It is impossible for us to turn off the flow of knowledge or emotion or conviction the moment it has sprinkled our own fifty-foot patches of front yard. The man who prays for rain must be willing to accept all the consequences of his answered prayer, and the man who prays for knowledge must have the same readiness to receive what may be involved in the knowledge he has asked for."

Chicago has a new beacon for the pilots of the air. Its millions of candle power projects the beam of light so powerfully that theoretically it could be seen three hundred miles away. But at that distance the straight-line rays are fifteen miles above the earth, more than twice as high as the boldest altitude seeker has ever climbed. The curving earth drops away from the beam, and the aviator must get within a hundred miles of the light before its rays can reach him, even from four miles above the ground.

When the beacon's brilliant beam flashes across the tabernacle at Zion City, Illinois, half a mile or more above the roof, its very altitude mocks the General Overseer as he thunders forth his favorite dogma that the earth is flat.

So one might suggest that a preacher who will read psychology for his mind's enrichment will not stop reading when the subject forces him to a new estimate of revivals, a new appreciation of the complexity of human moods and dispositions. He cannot be a new psychologist all the week and a naïve simplifier of the complicated things we call conscience and conduct when he gets into his pulpit.

"I will try to make my reading sufficiently well-balanced, to resolve once more, so that out of it I shall get something of the world's four supremely great stories: the story of human deeds, which constitutes history; the story of human knowledge, which constitutes science; the story of human creativeness, which constitutes art; and the story of human experience, which constitutes literature.

"I will beware," resolving again, "in my reading for investment, of that snobbery of provincialism which shuts out those who do not pronounce every shibboleth exactly as I do. I will try not to be so narrow as to exclude from my literary concern any writer who has anything whatever to say, by the cheap and short-sighted excuse, 'He followeth not us.'

"Therefore I will not let others make up for me an Index Expurgatorius. I will not be classed either with the highbrows or the lowbrows. I will reread, if I wish, *Uncle Remus* and *The Lady or the Tiger?* For reasons wholly personal I will myself exclude some who are of my theology, ethnology, politics, and literary clan; and I will hold fellowship, if I choose, with others who to certain of my fellow tribesmen are anathema.

"I will seek to guide my interest so that my reading shall be not merely symmetrical as to its themes, but so that it may help me to feel the life about me as being something greater than those overlapping or limited loyalties which of necessity and choice I profess. That is to say, I want my reading to show me a world which is more than a Methodist world, or more than an American world. I want it to be a revelation of religions, and yet I mean to read in regions where religion as such is not even mentioned. I do not intend to read so that either modernism or orthodoxy or success or revolt shall be crammed down my intellectual throat, willy-nilly."

I am no insistent pleader for "literary" preaching. Some few men have skill enough to fuse a sermon and a book review into an utterance unlike the conventional idea of either, but new and meaningful. And another few can charm us with their wealth of literary awareness and allusion; they take us on personally conducted tours of Hardy and Keats and Browning and Dostoievsky. But I do not see their tribe increasing, nor hear any insistent demand that it shall increase.

There is a better thing in store for the American pulpit—and by consequence for the American pew. I have faith in the increase of a race of preachers who are at home alike in the literature of their gospel and the literature of all sorts and conditions of men. Such preachers will find in other books what some folks would not accept if found in the Bible; they will have verified the Bible from a thousand other books, and will have tested the reality of a thousand other books by the Bible's touchstone of simplicity, reality, and profound understanding of the human heart.

It is one of the recurring mysteries of the soil, that now and then some grain or flower or shrub or treeling will be found springing up from crops long harvested, or from seeds never so much as sown.

If you would trace the newcomer, you may need to go several seasons back. The seed survived, wind-driven, bird-born or fallen from a neighbor's wagon, or shattered from the ripened grain. It lay dormant, until one spring the plow broke up a bit of new ground, or we had unusual conditions of weather, or a field was left fallow. Then one day we noticed the stranger, unbidden and unexpected, but making itself very much at home.

Far oftener, and much more happily, since not so much of the result will be weeds, the ideas and similitudes, the unreckoned vitalities of the preacher's "aimless" reading, never harvested, but plowed under, will spring up, not only unbidden, but alive and at home in the very time of his need.

He will find himself with a theme, or a pulpit, or an occasion, which evokes the thing he supposed he had forgotten; forces he does not suspect will be at work; and from their uncoerced activities he will have a new parable for his people's ears, a new warning or comfort for their hearts, or a new access of the power which, like prayer, will bind him and his people as with gold chains about the feet of God.

X

PREACHING TO THE MIND AND HEART

ELWOOD ROWSEY

THE sermon must enter the laboratory of men's souls. Religion is rooted in the intellect and the feelings. The preacher must keep in mind the intellectual and emotional nature of his hearers. His preaching must be intellectually emotional. Each age makes its own intellectual demands, and no age has demanded more than our own. Whether it be in the first or twentieth century, the challenge has ever been to the entire capacity and potentiality of man.

In the first century, Peter experienced the developing scope of God's will and work in the world as he had seen it revealed in Jesus Christ, and his answer to the challenge was in the form of an interrogation: "Who was I that I could withstand God?" In contrasting that age with our own, someone has said: "The age when the sunbeams were the golden arrows of Apollo is very far removed from the age in which we measure the wave lengths and count the vibrations of light."

Whatever changes the centuries may have wrought, we still affirm that no other intellectual or moral revelation is comparable to that which was wrought by the teaching and the life of Jesus Christ. What was there about this Man—his method and his message—that inspired men to love him, to serve him, and willingly to live for him or die for him? If we can discover these elements of his life, it will no longer be a mystery how such a Man inspired a group to undertake so stupendous a task as that of converting the world to the Christian religion.

How many prophets, had they stood with Jesus in the days of his flesh, would have said that Christianity seemed destined to have no destiny? To battle against odds was the mighty mission of those who would reveal Jesus to the hearts and minds of men.

Whether the progress of Christianity was due to emotional influence or to an intellectual process, it at least cut its way through the difficulties that sought its capture. It is well that we catch up this exhibition of faith, knowledge, and feeling, for it has been aptly said that "faith whose fruit is transcendent goodness, is rooted in essential truth." Christianity inherited Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament and Old Testament views, and though we find in this record the story of creation, we cannot find the faintest flickerings of the light of science. The Hebrew's universe was flat. Heaven was above him; hell was beneath him. The windows of heaven were opened to fertilize the earth with rains and snows. Our earth was the center of the universe.

The first-century Christians lived in an unscientific or prescientific age. Even the philosophers, the intellectuals who lived withdrawn in the peace of their self-content, knew little or nothing about science as we understand it today.

Science has brought us a changed view of the universe. It has lengthened our conception of time. It has broadened our world and discovered new worlds around us. It has knit together in one great union the majesty, the power, and the glory of God.

The law of the extension of the universe in space, the extension of the universe in time, the antiquity of man, the doctrine of evolution, the discoveries of geology—these and other considerations never troubled the preachers of the first century. These are intellectual questions that must concern the modern preacher. He will have to answer the question: Is science an ally or an enemy of religion? Is there a real contradiction, or is it imaginary?

This Christianity that survived the martyr's ax, this Christianity that went forth under persecution, preaching the Word, this Christianity that withstood the jabs of the learned and the jeers of the vulgar—is it possible for this Christianity to evolve and develop itself in an age of science?

Will Christianity in the future become extinct, or will it grow stalwart? Is Christianity a hindrance or a handicap in an age of science? Should science be hostile to Christianity, or should Christianity be hostile to science?

It is my conviction that a great deal of our difficulty is due to the ignorance of the scientist and the ignorance of the religionist. When the scientist knows more about religion and the religionist knows more about science, many of our difficult problems will have found their own solution. A greater knowledge on the part of the preacher and the scientist will tend to make a covenant between allies rather than a truce between enemies.

The modern preacher will discover that he has not escaped the problems of the first century; he has merely added to them the problems of the twentieth century. A narrow nationalism and a crude traditionalism have from the beginning hindered the individual and the race.

Our problems are legion, and since every generation must rethink its great problems, our intelligence is challenged. To refuse to believe is no excuse for not believing. We must be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us. We defeat the purpose of the Creator when we struggle in darkness, refusing to accept the light.

Our reverence for truth rather than traditionalism, our sympathy for the great world program of Christ as a substitute for our narrow nationalism, our appropriation of the contributions of the scientist, the philosopher and the religionist have opened to us a new intellectual world.

Dr. William Kelley Wright, in his *Student's Philosophy of Religion,* says: "The time is past when thinking men and women can either accept or reject religion uncritically. The Age of Faith when persons could be led through simple and childlike trust to accept religious teachings unquestionably, has passed away. No reasonable person can think it wrong to doubt or to ask for the reasons why he should believe, and, on the other hand, the time has ceased when anyone who knows anything about the subject tries to explain away our religion by attributing its origin to fraud and superstition."[1]

The preacher who is intellectually honest will be unable to give forth a catechetical "Yes" or "No." It is no longer sufficient, it will no longer satisfy. The modern mind should embark on an intellectual quest, and in so far as the truth of science and the trust of religion (or more especially the teachings of Jesus) helps men to accomplish this end, it is to be reverenced, appreciated, and appropriated.

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[1] The Macmillan Company.

Why should an honest mind shy off at the reconstruction of theology, or the reconstruction of science? Let us know the truth, that the truth may make us free. We preach the same gospel, but it must be delivered in a new environment, with an ever-changing and an ever-expanding background. A message with an intellectual appeal must grow out of a modern interpretation of our times. We will not throw away any of the good things of yesterday; neither will we attempt to defend or perpetuate a form or shell from which the spirit has departed. Not because it is old, not because it is new, but because it is true. That must be our controlling purpose and passion.

Such a gospel has the inherent power to bring to fruition that peace and good will which indicates that we love God whom we have not seen because we love our neighbor whom we have seen. Such a gospel, intelligently proclaimed, will not only keep us from slipping back into barbarism; it will advance us in our forward march to brotherhood. It will remove the scales of blindness from the eyes of our soul, and we will see the glorious day when above all nations stands humanity, and above all humanity, the God and Father of us all.

Such preaching will develop a generation, not only fit to live, but fit to live with. Intellectual difficulties will melt like the skyline of a great city as the mighty ships put out to an ever larger, broader and deeper sea. The modern preacher and the modern scientist alike should not hesitate to change their minds if it promises greater truth.

Both should approach their tasks with mutual understanding, with mutual sympathy, for mutual benefits. We acknowledge our indebtedness to the great Christian scholars; we respect those who have given us varied hypotheses. We are inheritors of their patience and perseverance; therefore we are debtors to those who have given us in the past that which makes for a more glorious present. If the steps they took and the steps we are taking bring us closer to truth, we are making progress.

To jump at conclusions is often to miss the truth, and to miss truth is to misuse truth.

The Bible is a record of the spiritual disasters and achievements as warning, instruction, and inspiration for our lives. We do not need to defend the Bible; we need intelligently to understand it. We are teaching science in our high schools and colleges to-day. The young men and women are not graduated until they have secured a certain number of credits in designated departments. We must expect, under such a process, to develop a generation of scientific minds, and once they start this eternal quest, not even the dogmatism of the church will be able to stop them.

It would be unfortunate for this generation to give up their science or their religion. It is therefore the intellectual duty of the present-day preacher to bring these allies together rather than to split the forces and array them on field of battle. Intellectual questioning does not preclude an active practical faith. It issues in a faith that is the essence of the highest reality. It brings us an experience that unlocks the door of an aspiring, achieving mind.

The process helps us to separate that which is temporary from that which is eternal. Who would care to issue a dogmatic prophecy as to what will happen to creeds and liturgies in the future? With more certainty we might prophesy the continued value of strengthening the things that remain—faith, hope, and love. In religion we walk by sight and insight. "Our religion," says Doctor Baillie, "must be born of and nourished by the fullest daylight of human intelligence."

Thus the modern preacher finds himself confronted with the task of preaching intelligently under such changing and challenging conditions as I have attempted briefly to set forth. The modern preacher must face not only the changes that challenge the intellect in matters of science and theology; he must intelligently face a new industrialism. The industrial world in which he lives and the industrial people to whom he ministers will touch his heart and challenge his head.

An intelligent sociology is as necessary to the welfare of society as is an intelligent theology. The factory has some things to teach the church, and the preacher who seeks to be helpful will make a diligent effort to understand. The workingman (he will discover) is not nearly so much interested in the poverty of Job as he is in the cause of his own poverty. The slavery of Joseph is not so alarming as the modern slavery that breaks the brain and brawn of multitudes of the under-privileged toilers. It is well to preach humbleness and meekness, but never as a smoke-screen behind which injustice and greed prosper at the expense of those who are paralyzed by a system over which they have no control. The church can no longer convince the worker that it is serious in preaching an intelligent gospel of brotherhood if at the same time it defends by silence or argument honeycombed industrial autocracy.

As Christian citizens we must never submit to a civilization that insists upon an industrial order that is more severe than serfdom. A man's spiritual nature will suffer when he is not treated as a person with a capacity to feel and to think with certain inalienable rights of choice. Such is not possible when a man who has given fifteen or twenty years of his life to an institution can be discarded at a moment's notice at the mere whim of his superior.

Intelligent preaching will make us anxious to know the condition under which men must earn their daily bread, and the benefit the church can be in helping them to find the right solution to many of their baffling problems. When we get more heaven on earth, the earth will get more interested in heaven. In order to get up to heaven we must bring heaven down to earth. The inquiring preacher will discover that the factory is just as close to the church as the church is to the factory, and if he will disturb himself to the extent of seeking some lessons in the mines and mills, he may see that the church has left the people, and not that the people have left the church. Many groups will offer the preacher as many solutions to this disturbing policy. The industrial leader who is more interested in profits than in people, will say: "The preacher is not a business man; he should not talk economics. Let him preach the Bible; we will run the mines and mills."

Should the preacher keep silent while serfdom and slavery refuse bread for the body and beauty for the soul? Will the church cease to champion the cause of the unfortunate, or will she continue to open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and give balm to the broken souls of civilization? Will selfishness destroy selfishness? Will shortsightedness cure shortsightedness? We must distinguish between our rights to impose doctrines and our right to share life. The former we have no right to do; the latter we have no reason for not doing. The preacher will be called upon to meet in the spirit of Jesus the pressure of interest groups. By "the pressure of interest groups" I mean organized combines that prevent the operation of the spirit of Jesus in our modern society. Until this attitude is changed and the spirit of Jesus is accepted, the kingdom of God cannot come to its fullest and finest fruition.

With such a problem threatening the very framework of Christian living, with selfishness and greed seeking to give the church an opiate, will the church lead, or will she be content to follow? As a follower the church is a failure; as a leader the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. In the spirit of Christ and in the strength of God the preacher must go forth to battle. He cannot "side in" with the man who is interested in war because he makes money out of war; he cannot condone a man's economic theory when it produces profits at the cost of principle; he must reveal the truth of God as it was manifested and dramatized in Christ, for in this truth, he will find unity and fellowship in service.

The preacher should not be a partisan politician. An unscrupulous politician will say to the minister, "Preach the Bible; stick to your text, and we will take care of politics." And some preachers accept the illusion. Certainly, no preacher should be a promoter of party politics for personal gain; neither should he evade his relationship to social, personal, and civic righteousness.

It is not party; it is principle. It is because many of us have allowed this passion to be chilled, that the church has become a voice crying in the night.

Can you conceive of a God who is interested in personal salvation without any interest in social righteousness? When will the lips of the prophets of God become vocal again? If our intelligence is to be beneficial to both preacher and people, we need not only a freedom of the press; we need a freedom of the pulpit.

"It is useless," says Dr. Harris E. Kirk, "to expect society to heal its own hurt by any means it possesses. Its laws but reflect its desires, and where those laws are too far in advance of its powers and intentions, they become mere invitations to lawlessness.

"The matter comes back to the leadership of the church, and the power that is to save us is a holy sacrificial love. A gospel that transformed the Corinthians into saints of God and turned the currents of the Middle Ages from corruption into new life and spiritual vigor, brought forth our modern free institutions and established our religious traditions, can again transform the life of peoples into communities of worshipers, children of light and of the resurrection."[1]

What is the place of the emotions in such a procedure? Our emotionalism should be intellectually controlled. Religion is rooted in the feelings. Our emotions help us to feel after God, if haply we may find him. We do find that he is not far from any of us. Feeling is a constituent element of the human soul. Our feelings give a warm, friendly glow to our rather cold intellectual processes. Our emotional appeals should grow out of our intellectual problems. We see the problem, and then as we see the ideal hope attained, our emotions are aroused and our feelings thrill us and move us.

Doctor Merrington says: "The reality of the self is not proved merely from the side of thought; it is also *felt.*"

Safe emotionalism grows out of an intellectual grasp. Professor William James says: "It is absolutely hopeless to attempt to demonstrate by purely intellectual processes the nature of the inner life."

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[1] From *The Spirit of Protestantism.* Cokesbury Press.

Benjamin Kidd goes so far as to say that the great secret of the coming age of the world is that civilization rests not on reason, but on emotion. I do not care to follow his thought here other than to suggest a phrase that he uses over and over again—"the influence of the emotion of an ideal."

The preacher should give emphasis in his preaching to the influence of the emotion of an ideal which will make the listener cling to that inner quality which, when lost, leaves life cold and worthless. It is the emotion of an ideal, properly directed, that lifts life to high and happy heights. It brings into being inner vision that makes man discontent with present accomplishments. He moves ever in quest of noble vistas and victories.

It is emotion of an ideal that brings comfort and satisfaction to the scientist who has discovered one of nature's hidden secrets. It is this emotion of an ideal that thrills the artist when his accomplishments are recognized. It is the emotion of an ideal that strengthens the heart of the preacher and sends him out with a new understanding of God and man and the universe. It is the emotion of an ideal that sends him on into the ages in quest of a city whose builder and maker is God.

So, says Benjamin Kidd: "It has been the emotion of the ideal which has brought to the harvest of action the souls of all the leaders of all the causes which have been since the world began.

"How to organize this illimitable cause under the conditions of the modern world is the problem before the human spirit. The master fact of the social integration is that the science of power and civilization is the science of the passion for the ideal. The passion for the ideal is the passion of perfection which is the passion for God."[1]

As the preacher contemplates his task of preaching to the mind and the heart, it is strengthening to go back to the teaching and preaching of Jesus—to see anew his intellectual insight, as well as his deep and controlled feelings. Jesus had the truth from the source of truth. He had constructive insight. He had the vision, the mind, and the emotion that are so greatly needed by the ministers and the laymen of our generation.

There has been a great deal of speculation recently as to what Jesus would say and do if he were to occupy a modern pulpit. Let us hope that he does occupy our modern pulpits; but if he were here in the flesh, I am sure he would identify himself with humanity, and his service with the service of humanity. We would find him in the schools for crippled children, in the infirmaries, the hospitals, the schools for the blind, the deaf and the dumb. He would be found near the tired women at the mills, and the despondent men in the mines—at the feasts and at the frolics.

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[1] *The Science of Power.* G. P. Putnam's Sons.

His consideration would be for the forum and the factory, those in joy and those in sorrow. We would discover him doing good to all classes, under all conditions of life. Christ would be sharing with us the Abundant Life. His effort would not be to stint or to destroy but to fulfill by filling full.

He would be striving to have labor and leisure, Christianity and business, allies and not enemies. He would teach us the value of bread, beauty and brotherhood. He would dramatize the effect of Love in Action as the working-form of God on earth. He would teach us that prepared places were for prepared people—that the kingdom of God was within us and that heaven was conquered territory. He would love the sinner and loathe his sin; he would be patient with the erring, the ignorant, and the unfortunate. He would oppose injustice, selfishness, and hypocrisy in high or low places, in church or state, in institutions of wealth or establishments of poverty. He would prove the value of his teachings by the life he lived and the service he rendered.

May I challenge you and myself to be honest, earnest ambassadors as we preach to the mind and heart of hungering humanity? Our cause is a great cause. Much depends on us. When we are called upon to watch, may we never be caught asleep. When indifference would chain us fast, may the vision of whitened fields drive us ever and ever toward the center of God's will and work.

"When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary;
They crowned him with a crown of thorns, red were his wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.
When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed Him by,
They never hurt a hair of him, they only let him die;
For men had grown more tender, and they would not give him pain,
They only just passed down the street and left him in the rain.
Still Jesus cried: 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do,'
And still it rained the winter rain, and drenched him through and through;

The crowds went home and left the streets without
a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against the wall, and cried for
Calvary."[1]

If indifference crucifies him afresh in our city streets, the preaching of our generation will have lost its appeal to the mind and heart.

May the "Christ of Every Road" help us to carry the load as colaborers in his ministry of redemption.

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[1] From *The Sorrows of God.* By Studdert Kennedy. Richard E. Smith, Inc.

XI

IS RELIGION GOOD NEWS?

Stanley High

It seems to be widely agreed that the man in the street these days wants religion but not the church. Observers inside the church and out of it report that religious interest is probably more widespread now than it has ever been, and ecclesiasticism closer to insolvency. The church, like the stock market, is hitting new lows—not for the year, but for all time. Send a religious appraiser into any department of the life of the average denomination and he will, with little question, come out with the same depressing report. Let him go into the department of evangelism. What will he find? Well, he will find all kinds of ultra-modern, ultra-scientific methods of evangelism worked out, with laboratory nicety, down to the last chart and the last entry in the card-index. But he won't find, in my estimation, any very great abundance of that kind of life or that kind of results that might have had significance in the eyes of such an experienced judge of things religious as, let us say, John Wesley or Dwight L. Moody. As a matter of fact, the church seems to be keeping pace, numerically, with the growth of our population. But that means, in brief, that though it is holding its own it is making no appreciable progress toward that complete evangelization which was once its aim.

Or let the religious appraiser go into session with the executives of the church's various benevolent boards. He will find despondency and desperation. There was a time when the vitality of a congregation was measured, to a considerable extent, in terms of its benevolent giving. Measured by that standard to-day the results would be far from encouraging. The religion that the church represents, whatever else it is, appears to be less than ever of the giving kind.

For this situation panaceas of various sorts are offered. It is suggested, for example, that what the church most sorely needs is more adequate advertising. Prophets of this panacea declare that all would be well if we got our religion into larger type. Personally I know very little about advertising, but I have discovered two things about advertising salesmen. First, they know their product. Second, they desire almost passionately to see it in use. It is likely that church advertising may fail as a panacea because the advertisers are not familiar enough with the product. As a matter of fact, the problem of the church is probably less on the display end than on the delivery end. The multitudes of people who pass the portals of our churches are familiar enough with the product that we profess to dispense. They are not altogether certain, however, that it will come as advertised. For that reason they are indifferent.

The second panacea that has its school of prophets is that of church union. I am of course one hundred per cent in favor of church union, but I doubt very much if an amalgamation of our ecclesiastical machinery will solve the problems that confront the church. The great peril in such a union is the machinery that it would create, for then with such magnificent machinery so well oiled and running so smoothly we would be likely to be more absorbed in watching the wheels go around than attending to things that the machine was designed to produce. One of these days Protestantism may be joined together in one vast fellowship. But that achievement, in my estimation, will come only when it has back of it a spiritual dynamic as vital and as moving as that which first caused the churches to disunite.

There is a third cure-all that has its prophets. We are told that the church's lagging spiritual vitality would be restored if church members increased their benevolent giving. I am quite aware of the record of tragedy that is being written these days across the world because

Christians here at home are no longer so much concerned as they once were for the spiritual welfare of others. I think it is safe to take this decreased concern for others as a sign of a declined spiritual vitality in ourselves. That situation, I do not believe, would be solved if we merely increased our gifts. The fundamental problem is not the declined giving of the church but the declined religious vitality of which that decreased benevolence is merely a symptom.

There are many other panaceas, and perhaps it may not be amiss to offer one of our own. It may be that the decreased vitality of Protestantism is due, after all, not to the fact that the church is not religious, but to the fact that it is not religious enough. It should have a salutary effect upon us who boast of our Modernism that it is chiefly in Fundamentalist circles that the church seems to retain its fullest measure of vitality. The Fundamentalists may outrage our scientific attitude toward the material world, but they, more than most Modernists, appear to be able to get things done in a practical, life-changing way in the world that is spiritual. As Modernists we are so open-minded that no one knows exactly what we believe to-day, and every one is certain that we will believe something else to-morrow. We are adepts at the business of giving so-called religious counsel on a vast number of incidental questions. We seem to be singularly inept in counseling people on those fundamental questions that are in every man's soul and will persist long after to-day's secular issues are disposed of and forgotten.

The church, in my opinion, will discover the way out when it rediscovers Christ and re-establishes an experience of him in the lives of its members. Fundamentally the church is neither a forum nor a social center nor a Sunday-morning culture club. It is, or it should be, a religious laboratory. When it ceases to demonstrate that in scientific fashion it can take men, remake them, and send them out with unshakable answers to the how, the why, and the whither of life, then the chief reason for its existence will cease to be.

It seems to be true that the world outside the church as well as in is hungering for this experience. Men caught up in the hectic whirl of to-day's society continue their headlong pace largely because they fear that questions for which they have no answer would catch up with them if they stopped. And we have built us a world designed to crowd out the embarrassing doubts that come with silence and reflection.

I have a friend who is a Wall Street broker. A typical Wall Street broker I have always regarded him, high-strung, driving, eminently successful. On the train one day we were discussing the problem of the new preacher for our church. Said the broker to me: "The kind of preacher I'd like to have is one who could introduce me to Christ so definitely that I could take him with me down to Wall Street." A day or two later I read in my morning paper of how one of our humanists had proclaimed with humanistic gusto that he proposed to rewrite the Psalms. He started in with the twenty-third. The twenty-third psalm, he said, was out of date. We are no longer shepherds and we know nothing about sheep. Let's remake it and declare: "The Lord is my dynamo," or "The Lord is my storage battery to get me uphill." When I read that statement I thought of my broker friend. His need was not for a dynamo or a storage battery. He had plenty of both. He was getting up all the hills that modern business competition put in front of him. What he needed was a Lord who was a shepherd, who could take him by the hand and lead him into green pastures and beside still waters and restore his soul. The church needs to rediscover the Christ of personal experience in order to recover a spiritual poise in this modern world and to provide that poise for others.

In the second place, it strikes me that this rediscovery of the Christ of personal experience is sorely needed in order that men may be made masters of the way they live. I am quite aware of the fact that sin is a word that we have deleted from our theological vocabulary. The process has continued, but the word is obsolete. None the less, one of the startling things about life is the discovery that one makes of the large number of apparently successful people who in their own hearts know they are defeated. I spoke not long since before a group of four hundred men at the Bowery Mission—four hundred men picked out of the streets of the Bowery section. They were defeated and they knew it. The record of their defeat was written in their faces. Many of them had come there that night interested in religion. They wanted to know not about a God who was an academic hypothesis or religion as a comfortable tea-time affair. They wanted an experience that would take them by the scruff of the neck, let's say, and shake the elements in their lives into a new alignment and enable them to go out as masters of the way they live. Most church people will never be with that Bowery crowd. The records of their defeats they will keep well hidden. But it is remarkable how much of the Bowery is sometimes concealed below our Fifth Avenue exteriors. It is to get at those defeats and turn them into victories that the church needs this rediscovery of the Christ of personal experience.

Finally, it strikes me that in this rediscovery the church might once again catch the contagious spirit that has always been characteristic of Christianity when it has been vital. Perhaps the most outstanding trait of present-day Christianity is the way in which present-day Christians keep it to themselves. There has never been a period in which our faith was more successfully bottled up. We reserve it for special occasions and at other times get it out only under great duress and with great embarrassment. And yet Christianity when it has been real has always been evangelical and missionary. When men have had this experience of Christ, they become evangels as definitely as Saul of Tarsus became, with his life-changing experience, an evangel. Christianity characteristically has been an out-reaching faith. Today's Christianity is becoming an ingrowing faith. Neither ecclesiastical reorganization nor more modern programs nor better advertising will transform a generation of self-complacent Christians into flaming evangels of a world-changing faith. That metamorphosis requires a deeper process. It requires, in my estimation, the rediscovery of the Christ of personal experience.

XII

EFFECTIVE PREACHING

EDGAR BLAKE

JESUS was a preacher. His Sermon on the Mount is the greatest utterance that ever fell from human lips. His disciples were preachers. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, measured by its results, immediate and remote, is undoubtedly the most effective Christian discourse ever delivered by a messenger of the cross. Paul was a preacher. His address before Agrippa is one of the most eloquent and moving appeals of which we have any record. When he wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth he said, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to *preach* the gospel." And he added, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." In his final exhortation to Timothy he wrote, "I charge thee therefore before God. . . . Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

All down through the Christian centuries the progress of the church has been marked by great preaching. The periods of greatest preaching have been the periods of greatest progress. Thus it has ever been, so it will ever be. Doctor Jefferson said from this very platform two years ago, "When the sun goes down on the evening of the last day, its dying rays will fall on the face of a man proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ." Whatever else you are called to do, you are called to be preachers—preachers of the gospel of the Son of God.

Dr. M. S. Rice tells of a retired veteran of the Detroit Conference who was eager to hear one of the distinguished leaders of the church who was to address the Conference. On the night of the anniversary the church was crowded. The old man, who was very deaf, made his way to the front pew and jammed himself down beside one of his younger brethren. When the speaker of the evening was presented, the old gentleman pulled out his long tin trumpet and carefully adjusted it to his ear and looked up at the speaker with eager expectancy. He listened for a time, but seemed to hear nothing. Turning to the younger brother beside him, he said in the strident tones of the deaf, "What's he saying?" The younger man tried to tell him, but without much success. He listened again, but his face showed no satisfaction, and turning again to the younger brother he made the same inquiry as before and with the same result. He put his trumpet to his ear the third time and listened intently, but there was only disappointment—he heard nothing. Becoming a bit impatient, he turned to his neighbor and said in a voice that all could hear, "What's he saying?" Confused by the attention the old man's voice was attracting, the younger man shouted into the old man's trumpet, "Father, he hasn't said anything yet."

"What is the first essential of successful preaching?" asked a young beginner of an older minister.

"Something to say," was the abrupt and rather disconcerting answer.

It will not matter much how polished your utterances may be, how perfect your technique, or how attractive your manner, unless you have something worth while to say, you will not be listened to for long. Men will say of you as Ezekiel said of certain of his contemporaries, "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Good preaching means reading, research, and study; hours with good books, days spent in the fellowship of noble minds. It means meditation; those quiet moments when the soul withdraws from the world and retires within itself and listens to the inner voices that speak to one only when everything else is silenced. "Only in meditation, devout ecstasy, and soaring flight does the soul solve its eternal problems. It is when the individual is alone that *identity* is felt—and the soul emerges." It means going apart with God as Jesus was wont to do before the break of day, and waiting with him in silent and solemn tryst until the soul and the Eternal become one. In the final analysis your authoritative message will come only from the mount of God.

It is not my purpose, however, to dwell upon the content of your message, but upon certain characteristics of its presentation. Many ministers have well-stored minds. They reason well. They have worth-while things to say, but they fail because of the manner of saying them. They leave their hearers cold—unmoved, unchanged, unchallenged. Nothing happens. The hearers depart as they came—and many of them do not return.

To make preaching effective, assuming the preacher has something worth while to say, there are certain ways of saying it that are indispensable to success. It is of these I desire to speak this evening.

One of the first characteristics of good preaching is *simplicity*—the presentation of truth in language, form, and content easily understood by one's listeners. A sermon that is not understood is a wasted effort.

Jesus possessed the gift of simplicity to a remarkable degree. He had the ability to state his truths in terms so simple and clear that his humblest hearers were able to understand him. When he spoke of God, he set him forth in terms of human parenthood—"When ye pray, say, Our Father." Contrast this simple symbol with a recent definition of God by one of our modern Christian philosophers: "God is the constitutional tendency in the universe toward progressive integration." The Chicago professor may know what he means by his definition; most of us do not. When Jesus set forth the goodness and mercy of God, he drew a picture of a wayward boy and a forgiving father, and another of a lost sheep and a searching shepherd—pictures so simple and lifelike that after nineteen hundred years they have lost nothing of their original fascination and power. When he was asked what one must do to inherit eternal life, he answered with the first and greatest commandment and the second which is like unto it—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." And then to make his meaning even more clear, he told the story of the good Samaritan, a story that has become the classic of friendly human service. When he wanted men to see what the kingdom of God is like and how it makes its way on earth, he pictured the silent working of the mustard seed and of the leaven that was hid in "three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." It is not surprising that the common people heard him gladly. They could understand him.

The Scotchman who complained of his pastor that he was invisible six days in the week and incomprehensible on the seventh, said he didn't mind about the first, but he did object to the second—and he had a right to object. No minister of the gospel has a right to ask other people to listen to him unless he is willing to speak a language his hearers can understand. "What's he driving at?" should never be said of a preacher. No one but a philosopher has the privilege of speaking in an unknown tongue. Yet I fear that occasionally some of us are more philosophers than preachers of the word.

Many preachers have the instinct of aviators—as soon as they announce a text they taxi for a short distance and take off from earth and disappear in the clouds. After that only the splutter of motors and the din of exploding gas are heard, all of which signifies that they are flying high—very high.

There are certain dangers in intellectual high flying. When one soars so high that he loses all contact with the earth, he has no means by which to determine distance, direction, or position. He hangs helplessly in midair with no means of finding his way back to earth again. Lieutenant Soueck, who climbed forty-two thousand feet and won the world's record for altitude, said the higher he ascended the thinner the air became and the greater the difficulty he had in breathing. Also the higher he soared above the earth the colder it got, until his thermometer registered seventy-nine degrees below zero, and was in danger of freezing. When a preacher soars too high, he is in danger of spiritually suffocating and freezing his congregation. There is also another danger from high flying, particularly if you make your ascent in a balloon. When a certain height is reached the air becomes so rarified that the pressure within overcomes the resistance without and the balloon bursts. In such an emergency all that one can do is to grab a parachute and leap to safety. I have witnessed not a few verbal performances of this character. In fact I have participated in one or two myself. They are exhilarating, but not edifying. Brethren, I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, as "good ministers of Jesus Christ" keep close to earth. Remember you are not "preaching to the moon." The moon has no need of your light, and the angels can care for themselves. You are preaching to people, plain, ordinary folks who inhabit the earth. Don't get too far away from them. Stay with them. Strive to be seen and heard and understood of men. If you succeed, you will be a good preacher even if you are not a great one. And it is goodness rather than greatness that gives one a reward in the kingdom of heaven.

Heed the words of Doctor Jefferson, spoken as he neared the close of his remarkably successful pastorate at Broadway Tabernacle. He said: "People are tired on Sunday. They have seen enough shows through the week. They have had all the entertaining they care for. What they want on the Lord's Day is a quiet conversation with an earnest-minded man who is interested in the high things of the spirit and who knows how to interpret the words of Jesus and the signs of the times. . . . A preacher who is content to speak in everyday language to his people Sunday after Sunday about Jesus Christ, and the application of Christian ideas to their personal experiences and to the problems of their generation, can be interesting and fresh at the end of thirty years."

By simplicity I do not mean specializing in the commonplace, or the repetition of personal experiences until they become boresome and threadbare. By simplicity I mean clarity of thought and expression—the ability to make others see and feel what you yourself have seen and felt.

It has been said of Jesus that "when he talked to people, he concentrated his whole genius on making them really *see* things, and *hear* things, and *feel* their spiritual value and significance." And he succeeded because of the clarity of his thought and speech.

I hold that any truth that is really vital for life can be stated in terms which the average hearer can understand in so far as that truth is vital to his own life. The preacher who cannot state the truth in terms of sufficient clarity and simplicity for his hearers to grasp it has not grasped it himself.

When John saw the water of life flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, it was *pure* and "clear as crystal," and so must it ever be if it is to slake the spiritual thirst of men.

Many men have muddy minds. Their thinking is never clear. Their thought is like the waters of the Mississippi, always discolored by the sediment through which it flows. Like horses they always put their feet in the waters they drink. They soil everything they offer to others. I had a professor, a lovely Christian character; a scholar, reverent and devout; one of the very best men I ever knew. But he was constantly in trouble. He was forever being misunderstood. His enemies said he was a heretic and sought his condemnation and deposal. They were wrong, as heresy hunters usually are. He was not a heretic; he was a saint. But he had a muddy mind. His thought was always out of focus. He was never able to present the truth in correct perspective, consequently he was continually in difficulty in his classes, and finally was forced to resign his chair.

To change the figure, there are many men, and among them many ministers, who make their home on the Grand Banks. Their thinking is constantly enveloped in fog. The clear, searching sunlight never breaks through their minds. Their mentality is hazy. They befog everything they undertake to illuminate. Now fog is a dangerous thing. It is not the storms, dreadful as they sometimes are, nor the mad, mountainous waves that threaten to engulf the ship, that mariners fear most at sea. Next to icebergs it is fog they dread above everything else. When it shuts down around you, thick enough to cut with a knife, until you cannot see before or behind, or on either side, or above, or below, when the sun is shut out from your vision, when there is not a star to be seen, and you have nothing by which to steer your course, then you feel creepy and long to be on land again. I have much the same feeling as I listen to a foggy-minded preacher. I am always afraid of a collision with something or somebody.

Fog is all right for lima beans. They prosper in its clammy dampness. But fog has little to offer to men. It has been determined by scientific experiment that a bank of fog three feet thick, six feet high, and one hundred feet long contains less than one seventh of a glassful of water. You cannot slake thirst with fog. There is only one safe thing to do with it and that is to keep out of it.

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, "and the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," the first command of God was, "Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night."

Jesus said of himself: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Light is the swiftest messenger God has given to men. If I were speaking into a microphone this evening and someone were listening in in Australia, my Australian audience would hear my words before you hear them who sit in the rear of the room one hundred feet away. My voice would travel by light waves to my Australian hearers; it would travel by sound waves to you. It is worth remembering that light travels a million times faster than sound.

When Phillips Brooks preached his first sermon before his seminary class, he took for his theme, "The Simplicity of Christ." One of his fellow students said of the sermon that there was little simplicity in it and no Christ. You will have to have both in good measure if you are to become successful preachers of the cross as Brooks himself became.

A second characteristic of good preaching is *humanness.* It was said of Phillips Brooks that he always "had in mind the human uses of the truth." Many ministers have a passion for the truth, but no passion for the people to whom they preach the truth. "I am not interested in actualities, only in possibilities" may be good gospel for a philosopher, but it is poor philosophy for a preacher. He is forced to deal with actualities. They are the raw material out of which possibilities are made.

"Show me thy foot, O genius," said Victor Hugo, "and let me see if thou hast the dust of earth on thy heel." Whether you are a genius or not, if you are God's messenger to men, you must have "the dust of earth" on your heel. Your feet must be on the ground. You must deal with folks and with folks as they are. It is not enough to be interested in the truth, and the truth alone. You must be interested in the truth as it is related to life.

One of the most striking and significant things about the preaching of Jesus is its human content. His message was always adapted to the needs of the multitudes who gathered about him to hear his words. His discourse dealt with their problems—their sins, their temptations, their weaknesses, their failures, their diseases, their disappointments, their discouragements, their aspirations, and their hopes. His parables were human-interest stories. The sower who went forth to sow, the wayward son, the good Samaritan, the rich fool, the unjust judge are all stories from real life. The Sermon on the Mount with its beatitudes—the meek, the mourner, the merciful, the peacemaker, the persecuted, the pure in heart—the Lord's Prayer with its petitions—"Give us this day our daily bread," "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—his story of the birds of the air who sow not neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet are cared for by their heavenly Father; his picture of the lilies of the field that toil not, neither do they spin, yet surpass the glory of Solomon in their loveliness—all of these are intensely human, drawn from real life with the touch and tenderness of an artist.

His ministries are human ministries. His miracles are not the weird and spectacular signs his enemies demanded of him; rather they are the healing touch of a lover of men. The cleansing of the leper, the cure of the man born blind, the healing of the paralytic, the raising of the widow's son, the feeding of the multitudes were ministries to life. When John, imprisoned, discouraged, and doubting, sent his messengers to Jesus to inquire if he were the one who should come or should they look for another, the answer Jesus gave them was, "Go to John and show again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them"—these humanities were the proof of his divinity, that he was the expected messenger of God.

You are going out to be ministers to men—to be preachers of the gospel of Christ to plain, ordinary folks. They will gather before you on the Sabbath day—the disappointed, the defeated, the discouraged, the broken, the fearful, the doubting, the disillusioned. They will all be there. And they will come to you as they came to Christ of old, with their eager, wistful faces, with hunger in their hearts and with hope in their souls, and they will whisper to one another: "What will he say to us to-day?" "What help will he bring?" Your problem is folks—plain, simple, ordinary people. Your business is to help them, to give courage, to give hope, to impart strength. William James said, "The very core of the religious problem is the cry, 'Help! Help!'" That is the cry that will come up to you, and you must answer it.

Jane Cowl, the brilliant actress, in a recent article on the theater, says with fine insight that the success of the stage "must be measured by the depth, the richness, and the power of the response which it awakens in those who look upon it, listen to it, feel it, and think about it." The same can be said in equal truth of the pulpit. The test of its success is in the response it awakens in its hearers. Miss Cowl speaks of the "silent antiphony" between the actor and his hearers—the spiritual give-and-take, the soul interaction between artist and audience. It is precisely that thing—the "silent antiphony"—that gives the thrill to preaching; the quickened intellect, the awakened emotions, the light in the eye, the glow on the face, the new purposes registered in the quivering lips and the set jaw, all bearing silent witness that something is happening in the lives of the hearers. To see all this, to feel it all, to know that men and women will be different to-morrow, that they will never be the same again because they have been in church today—all this is the indescribable joy of preaching. But it is a joy you will never know except as you come to grips with life—except as you deal with human values in the light of your own life's experiences. "Never a heart will be ignited comes not the spark from the speaker's soul." These words are as true to-day as they were when they were first spoken by an ancient seer fifteen centuries ago.

When Daniel Webster described to President Fillmore the preparation of his great address on Adams and Jefferson, he said: "I will tell you what is not generally known. I wrote that speech one morning before breakfast, in my library, and when it was finished my paper was wet with my tears." The fatal defect in many of our sermons is there is no moisture on the manuscripts; they are too dry. Life is made of human stuff, and preaching that appeals to life must be made of human stuff too.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson offered a bit of sage advice to a young author who had not well succeeded though nature had endowed him with considerable talent. He said, "If you would put on a boy's jacket and go to sea, before the mast, for a year, it would put vitality into your inkstand that would last your lifetime."

God made you men a long time before he made you ministers. Don't forget your original outfit. Keep human. Be men among men.

A third characteristic of good preaching is the note of *authority.* I do not mean the authority of force—an intolerant dogmatism that denies the right of others to differ with your conclusions. Neither do I mean mere declamatory assertion. All of these are farthest from my thinking. I mean the authority of experience—the quiet conviction in one's own soul that something has happened in one's own life that is profoundly worth while—the contagious certainty that comes from conscious contact with the Eternal.

It is what I think Jesus meant when he replied to the questionings of Nicodemus, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." It was that quality in his preaching and teaching that distinguished him from the other teachers of his times. Matthew tells us that "the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." It is the note that is characteristic of the old Hebrew prophets. "The word of the Lord came unto me"—"Hear ye the word of the Lord"—"Thus saith the Lord." These were the constant claims of the prophets to the right to be heard. It was the secret power of the early disciples. When the council forbade Peter and John to preach the doctrine of the risen Christ, Peter replied to them, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." It is what Paul meant when he asserted, "I know him whom I have believed." All great preaching down through the Christian centuries has been marked by the note of spiritual authority, and there has never been any really great preaching without it. It was said of Phillips Brooks, the greatest preacher of modern times, that "he was ever an eager inquirer, but always a positive preacher." His hearers always left his presence with a new sense of God upon them.

The same thing is true of all men who have ever profoundly influenced the thinking and the lives of other men. The secret of Webster's power was not in his rhetoric or his oratory, but in the tremendous conviction that lay behind his words. An advocate who does not believe in his case makes a sorry spectacle in court. The world will always listen to the man who knows, and who knows he knows. It has been very truthfully said that "the cure for dullness in the pulpit is not eloquence, but reality." The pulpit is the last place in the world for vagueness or uncertainty or doubt. The men and women who come to hear you will have their own uncertainties, their doubts and fears. That is why they come to you. They want their doubts dissolved, their fears allayed, their aspirations and their hopes strengthened. They come to you in search of assurance. Unless you have something in your own experience you can offer to others and upon which you are willing to stake everything you have and everything you are, you will not help them. They will turn away sorrowfully and say, "There is not here that which we had hoped," and they will not return. You cannot build a successful ministry on negations.

Multitudes of men and women are at sea. What Mr. Lippmann calls "the acids of Modernity" have eaten away the hawsers that held them to their ancient moorings, and they are adrift without rudder, chart, compass, or spiritual destination. Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell, in his brilliant little book, *Beyond Agnosticism,* has pointed out that men once worshiped God and cast him out and began to worship man. Man's divinity became the only divinity they knew or desired. But the World War brought disillusionment. Man was discovered to be a beast and not a god, and the beastliest of all the beasts—the only animal, in fact, that ever organizes for the collective destruction of his own species, old and young. Man is no longer worshiped. His divinity has disappeared and with it the things that were associated with his kingdom. Confidence in democracy, the state, the home, and society has been rudely shattered, and with this loss of confidence in these social entities the foundations of morals have been rudely shaken. So many things have been thrown overboard that their bark has lost its ballast. It has become too light to steer. It is impossible to hold it to any settled course. It is beaten and baffled by every wave of doubt. It is driven hither and thither by every shifting breeze. It sees no port ahead. It finds no peace, no rest, no repose.

Professor Harry Elmer Barnes had an article in one of our popular magazines recently to which he gave the title, "A New Conception of God." In the professor's "new conception" God was eliminated from the universe; nothing but impersonal "Cosmic Energy" was allowed to remain. Jesus was reduced to a purely "historical and secular" person whose "unique wisdom and benevolence" has "evaporated." The soul in man was ruled out; immortality was relegated to the limbo of primitive superstition; the mind became a mere matter of "physico-chemical relationships," and man himself became a tiny speck of carbon diluted with water. We were told that the sense of sin is "a manifestation of adolescent emotional development," that the Ten Commandments should be forgotten and conduct determined solely by "secular and mundane consideration," and that religion is "a cultural concept and social institution." The professor was generous enough to say he had no "intention of attacking religion in any comprehensive and indiscriminating fashion." One wonders what would have been left if Professor Barnes had really undertaken to do a thorough job.

I make mention of Professor Barnes not because his personal views are entitled to overmuch credence, but because they represent a widely prevalent state of mind among many people who have lost the faith they once held and know not whither to turn to find it again. Many of them could say with Wordsworth:

"There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light—
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;
Turn wheresoe'er I may
By night or day
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

"The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
And yet I know where'er I go
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth."

The present mood of doubt is not willful. It is wistful. It wants the word of truth. It seeks the satisfactions of certainty. Its hands are outstretched to any guide who knows the way to God and who can lead them there. A Parisian laborer as he was on his way home from work at the close of the day was given a religious tract by an evangelist. Glancing at its contents he turned upon his would-be benefactor and said with almost startling abruptness: "Sir, we French are done with an imposed religion. But if one will come and preach unto us a gospel of reality, to him will we listen and gladly." I believe that is pretty much the mood of the present hour.

Doctor Bell quotes an eminent scientist as saying to a ministerial friend: "It is in what the church knows, or ought to know, that I am interested. Why do they not speak up and reveal what the race has discovered?" E. Stanley Jones says the world stands waiting at the door of the church "for some clear word of guidance, some certain note of experience of God."

In my thirty-five years in the Christian ministry I have never seen so many wistful faces, so many hungry spirits, so many groping hands seeking for some clear word of prophecy as now. George Bernard Shaw said some months ago, "At present there are probably more people who feel that in Christ there exists the only hope for the world than ever before in the lifetime of men now living." Seldom has there ever been a period when there was so fine a field for the Christian minister who is sure of himself and sure of the reality of his message of guidance and deliverance for men as now. If you do not have it, then I counsel you to turn back or remain where you are until you find it.

XIII

SOME ASSETS FOR PREACHING IN THE LIFE OF TO-DAY

HALFORD E. LUCCOCK

THIS topic sounds as though this chapter would have to be a whistling solo. How can anyone write on such a topic without whistling to keep up his courage? Many who are familiar with the obstacles to preaching in the world of to-day must ask: "Where has this man been living? Probably in a monastery, or perhaps he has been parked in a theological seminary 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife.' Hasn't he heard the news that preaching is out of date? Hasn't he heard about the radio and the movies? Doesn't he know that preaching is a quaint, obsolete and necromantic hang-over from the dear dead days of the late lamented Queen Victoria?"

I have heard all the bad news. I know the difficulties which preaching encounters, that long and mournful rosary which we so often count over one by one, beginning with the decline of authority, going on through the prestige of science and the prevalence of the Sunday automobile, and ending up with the talkies. I am not going to count over that rosary again tonight nor do I think I need to whistle to keep up my courage.

These factors in our present world must not, of course, be disregarded. We do live in an age of obstacles the character of many of which is unique and the force enormous. One of the interesting stories of the Civil War is that of a couple of small children who lived in northern Virginia and heard, one bright July morning in 1861, some very interesting noises which were quite new in their experience. The noises came from "over the hill," so with all the enterprise of six years they started out to find the noises. All morning they trudged on their way and just a little bit after noon they walked into the midst of the battle of Bull Run. Anyone graduating these days from a theological seminary is thrown into the middle of a larger and more confusing battle than Bull Run. Yet even granting all that, the minister must be on his guard against allowing himself to be enveloped in a disastrous and ruinous mood of self-pity.

One truth must be mentioned at the outset because it is so frequently forgotten. Part of to-day's life is composed of the same forces and experiences that were part of human life when the curtain first rolled up on history along the banks of the Nile. A large part of to-day's life is composed of old hungers, of ancient wonders, of human heartaches that are among the most ancient things in the world. These needs call, as they have always called, for some light, warmth, and power with which to face life. They are part of to-day's life just as much as the latest invention reported in the morning papers. Because that is true if a man has anything to say which roots in experience and draws on inexhaustible divine resources, he will always have people to listen to him.

The issues on which we are settling our thought, however, are the ones somewhat new to-day, which give a different tone and quality to our own time. One does not, like old Diogenes, have to search with a lantern to find some genuine and definite assets for preaching in some present moods and tempers.

The first I will mention is that religion is a hot spot in much present thinking. This does not mean that churches are crowded. It does not mean that religious organizations are not having to carry on under enormous loads and against baffling obstacles, but it does mean that religion is a live question. We do not have to hold a stethoscope over it to determine whether there is any spark of life in it. I had rather go into the business of preaching in a time when religion was scrutinized, discussed, lampooned, assailed, criticized than in a time when it was respected and decidedly neglected. I feel that way for the same reason that I had much rather attend a football game than a funeral or a reception where everyone goes through a sense of duty and the main question of the hour is, How soon can we decently get away? Of course religion is a matter of indifference with large numbers of people. The cartoon in the New Yorker a few weeks ago expressed this truth very forcibly. It showed a company of summer people gathered on a bathing beach, and one young man said to a crowd of people about him, "Let's go to church, just for the hell of it."

Nevertheless, religion is alive. As one man said to another in a suburban train not long ago, glancing at the front page of his newspaper, "I see that God has made the front page again today." That seems a crude expression, but it expresses one of the vital facts about our world to-day. God is front-page news. There is a tremendous asset to the church that the interest in religious questions has moved in from the fringe to the center, that it has moved to the question of God. The extent and nature of God is to-day the one theological question that the majority of people find worth talking about at all. When I began preaching twenty years ago, that was not the case. There was much discussion of minor questions—the modern view of the Bible, whether Christianity had anything to do with social questions. The vital question of religion, the nature of God, very often—if it got into churches at all—had to be introduced surreptitiously between lantern slides. A president of an Eastern college said to me not long ago, "In the last year or so God has come back to the college campus." Sometimes I used to have a feeling that preachers were reluctant to talk about religion on the college campuses. Frequently they picked out some question in ethics and made a little circle around it, examining it from all sides. To-day the sermon that arouses the greatest interest is one that is frankly and undisguisedly religious, that deals with God. I think that is one of the real reasons for a man entering the ministry to-day, that he will have a chance to occupy himself with the question of man's destiny and the meaning of God. In view of this interest it is a matter of the warmest and sincerest congratulations to Boston University that this fall two of its most brilliant thinkers should have given to the world the light on this aspect of religion which is to be found in Dean Knudson's *The Doctrine of God* and Professor Edgar S. Brightman's *The Problem of God.*

Again, one of the marks of our times is an increasing interest in Jesus. I need not stop to labor this point. It is too apparent to need evidence. The last five years, to go back no further, have been marked by an effort to discover and explain Jesus. He has appealed to the widest possible variety of personalities and interests. In our present-day world can two men be found further apart than Papini and Bruce Barton? They are both biographers and interpreters of Jesus. Could two men of greater differences in background and point of view be found than Middleton Murray and Kagawa, of Japan? Yet they both bring their whole interest to the whole study of Jesus. What a world of difference there is between Emil Ludwig and Albert Schweitzer! —yet they meet at the common theme of Jesus. Just as in the eighteenth century it used to be the approved thing to round out an education by making a grand tour of Europe, so to-day it seems that a new convention is growing up which demands that an author round out a literary career to full circle by writing a biography of Jesus. As Heine said, one hundred years ago, "The world cannot get away from the fascination of that strange figure on the cross." That is immeasurably truer to-day than when Heine said it. It is an enormous asset for the preacher.

Again, there is an asset for genuine preaching not so obvious but just as real in the way in which the movies to-day are showing the futility of life which has no real faith. There is to be found great promise and opportunity for the Christian religion in what is one of the most depressing aspects of life as reflected in current literature, especially fiction. That opportunity is in the sense of frustration; in the feeling of pointlessness, of baffled futility which is so common a mark of the novels that drop hourly from the press. These novelists have almost become a school called "the Futilitarians." I do not have in mind necessarily the "life-is-hell" school of fiction, those novels which flourish so luxuriantly about us—novels that begin with a headache and end with a yawn. I have in mind, rather, a whole range of sincere novels, such as *The Grandmothers,* by Glenway Wescott, to mention only one, in which there is the strong feeling that life is meaningless and futile.

The sense of futility may seem to be a very unpromising beginning for the preaching of the Christian evangel. Yet is there not real truth in the suggestion that the bitter sense of the futility of life, or, at least, a questioning of the value of life, may have for our time many of the emotional and religious values of the old-fashioned conviction of sin? That conviction is almost wholly absent from our life. We still sing at missionary gatherings:

"The sons of earth are rising
To penitential tears,"

but we may look about us and ask, "Where?" That feeling of humility and repentance is the one thing most conspicuously absent from the twentieth-century scene. Yet in this mood expressed in so many novels there is the sincere admission that there is something terribly lacking in life as millions are leading it. When Thackeray was writing *Vanity Fair,* he said in a note to his mother, "What I want to make is a set of people living without God in the world, only that is a cant phrase." That very thing is being done hundreds of times; people picturing life without God in the world and hence finding the whole thing empty. Without in the least intending it, the novelist is preaching the everlasting gospel, that it is religion which gives meaning to life. That pessimistic feeling of futility is an authentic diagnosis of need. We have on a large scale what is a very real element in religious behavior—the sense of frustration. This breaks down complacency and pride, and opens the way, not for another diagnosis, but for a cure. The pessimism of the playwright and the novelist is the opportunity of the preacher.

Once more there is an asset in the very flippancy so evident in our literature. For we can go back to several historical parallels which indicate that many an "age of the wits" has been followed by a splendid renaissance. We have an obsession for flippancy, characteristic of every age of wits, which centers its attack on what is called dullness. When we examine the matter, "dullness" turns out to be anything which is neither an epigram nor an epithet. Large numbers among us are living on an intellectual diet of "wisecracks." Our major prophets are minor jokesters.

And yet right where we seem to have touched bottom, there is evidence for real spiritual hope. A backward glance to the past reminds us that an age of wits has often been the prelude for a renaissance of the soul. To take only one instance, we do not have to stretch our imagination very far to find many striking parallels between the intellectual and spiritual conditions of our day and the age in which the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century took its rise. It was in one aspect an age of the "Wits" with Dryden's McFlecknoe and Pope's Dunciad expressive of a relentless attack on "dullness." The same generation was marked by the campaign against what was called "sentimentalism" and "enthusiasm" as being beneath the dignity of man. Deeper still, the philosophy of the time was negative. It left the thinker no certainty of anything beyond that of existence, no positive faith for optimistic hope.

The sequel is vastly interesting. In the midst of the repression of the spiritual nature of man Whitefield and the Wesleys appeared and the soul of the nation had a volcanic resurrection. These wandering minstrels of God went up and down the hedgerows of England and literally sang a new climate into being. After a long confinement of the soul a transcendental philosophy and religion surged up, blew off the lid and made it possible once more for the spiritual nature of man and a rational hope to find expression. That kind of a resurrection has happened again and again and there are many signs that we stand at the threshold of a new renaissance of the spirit in our time.

The very questioning mood by which large numbers of people are marked is an asset for the uncompromising preaching for the kingdom of God when that critical mood is carried over into the social and economic life. Ray Howard said the other day of Heywood Broun, "That he was no mere fresh carpenter nor jokesmith, but an artistic debunker of official flapdoodle." Now, that is part of the job of every Christian minister—to debunk the hokum with which people have been deluded and prevented from seeing the realities of their world. The refusal on the part of multitudes to swallow the stupidity and official bedtime stories sent forth by the privileged powers in the economic world is a tremendous asset to the kingdom of God. The most tragic mistake that any church can make is to repress that tendency to see critically the interpretations in social and economic affairs which are put out for people's consummation; and it is on the development of that thinking and clear-seeing faculty that the hope of a better world so largely waits.

In the very economic distress in which we are engulfed there is a decided asset for preaching which is not mere mouthing of platitudes, but an honest effort to find the implications of Jesus' teaching in our everyday life. I do not at all mean the opportunity which is so complacently stressed by many preachers—that in times of distress people turn to religion. That has been proved to work again and again, and it well may be. There is a real opportunity for the preaching of those values in life which do not depend on material possessions. What I have in mind right now, however, is something very different from that. I mean that our present condition is raising the question in the minds of many whether there is something fundamentally the matter with our whole economic order, something so deep that it will never be helped by a few more bread lines or soup tickets or Presidential conferences with heads of industry, and all the machinery which is being hastily set up to meet the appalling need of unemployment. Many are coming to see that our fundamental defect is a lack of social control of the organization of production with an eye toward general welfare rather than the anarchy of a wild scramble for private profit. Many are coming to feel that we will have this painful problem of overproduction, and unemployment, and suffering, and waste as long as we allow the motive of private profit its present place of ascendency on the throne in our economic life. They refuse to be frightened away from the social implications of their Christianity felt by the mere repetition in a tone meant to be ghastly and terrifying of the word "Socialism." The unemployment is making it increasingly clear that some sort of planned production with an eye to public welfare is the only alternative to the waste and suffering of overproduction and unemployment.

May I say, for another thing without being suspected of provincialism, that it is a great day in which to be a Methodist preacher. By that I mean that there are emphases in the historical Methodism which to-day are coming to a place of influence far beyond that of a generation ago. It is an obvious commonplace that Methodism has been marked by an emotional drive. The place of emotion in life has been set forth with a fresh emphasis in the world of psychology. Indeed, it may be almost said that this emphasis on the part of emotion in life is the only thing on which almost all schools of psychology agree. It has been in part a normal reaction from a lopsided over-intellectualizing of the self. Schools of psychology which clash in other respects agree here. The behaviorist finds a stimulus or "drive" as the clue to behavior. The Freudian builds on emotion of the sexes as the mainspring of man's being, which leads either to his salvation or damnation. The social psychologist, in season and out of season, stresses emotion to explain the behavior of human beings. The latest arrival in the temple of wisdom, the psychiatrist, tells us with every other breath that sanity lies in our emotional control. When we go to the social worker, we are told in his—or more frequently her—scientific jargon that maladjustments in family life are the cause of a large part of social ills—emotion again being given the rôle of chief hero, or villain, usually both. All these people preach one sermon from the text, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." To keep our heads, we must train our hearts.

Now, all this bears out the wisdom and truth of an emphasis which Methodism can claim. Let us hope that we shall not witness the irony of Methodism giving up a strong element of driving emotion for an academic intellectualism at the very time when the rest of the world has discovered in emotion the main-spring of life.

One other trend which makes this a great day for preachers with Methodist traditions behind them is the emphasis on experience. The point need not be labored except to say one thing: we have been prone to talk too much about experience without explaining just what we mean in plain, every-day human terms. To paraphrase the old Negro spiritual, "Everybody talking about experience, ain't having it." And everybody talking about religious experience is not clearly showing the way to the possibility of having a religious experience in this present day.

In the light of these things, what kind of preaching shall we do? I make but two suggestions:

1. The first is, let us banish the apologetic mood. Let us get out of the defensive attitude into the positive frame of mind. This is not a plea for unsupported dogmatism. Will you pardon a football analogy? Instead of staying always on the defensive, for heaven's sake let us take the ball and run with it. We seem to be always defending Christianity. A glance at the sermon pages of the paper seems to picture a harassed and heroic ministry heroically beating back the assault of two dragons, dimly recognized as Walter Lippmann and Joseph Wood Krutch. No game was ever won by defensive playing entirely. The best you can hope for is a tie score, and the kingdom of God will never be brought in by a tie score. It needs a positive thrust; in other words, let us get off of our defensive game into a vigorous carrying of the Christian message without apology. That means the carrying of the fact of Christ into life by men who are obviously possessed by a lifting faith in him.

2. Preaching which takes advantage of these assets will be that which recognizes and emphasizes the ethical consequences of Christian faith in the most important areas of life. During this last winter I watched with interest that famous clock in the Wells Cathedral in which every hour, by an ingenious mechanism, riders on little horses come out and spin round in a circle. Too much of our church service has been of that character—a recurrence at regular intervals of a mechanical spinning round. This so often is substituted for the preaching of the gospel. I have often thought that without any irreverence we could imagine Jesus speaking to his ministers in the words in which Hamlet addressed the players: "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines." What an opportune word that is for any preacher! God help us all. How easy it is to mouth the gospel so that it comes out a neutral blur which neither offends nor excites anyone! I have gone through that painful experience of presenting a speaker to an audience, when, just at the moment that I was to introduce him, I have forgotten his name. In such a calamity there is but one thing to do. You say, "We will now have the pleasure of hearing Doctor"—and then you clear your throat and make a gurgling noise

which makes people feel they did not understand you very clearly. I have preached like that too often. I have mouthed the message of Jesus so that it did not cut sharp and clear. Instead of standing out like a black-and-white etching, it was a pale pastel impressionistic blur. There are so many ways of mouthing it. One of the best is to just do it with generalities. Take a concrete instance: When Congress meets, the big-navy crowd will be all set to build up to the limit to the amount allowed by the London agreement. That will be a calamity for the peace movement. It will start new building races with added impetus. What will we say about it? Will we rally the Christian defense of the country in terms so strong that no one will mistake them or will we mouth it?

There is one particular way of betraying our Christian wisdom on social questions on which I cannot forbear to speak. That is the distressing way in which the prohibition question has shoved every other moral question into the background so that we have seen the distressing spectacle again and again of Christian forces of the State lined up for a man who represented some of the most formidable obstacles of the social order. I believe in prohibition. I believe in it very much more strongly since coming back from two months in England. Some of my friends think that they detect a light of fanatic frenzy in my eye when I talk about it. Looking at the long lines of children waiting outside of London saloons, and watching with some care the whole working of the liquor work in Great Britain, I believe with all the conviction of my heart in prohibition. Nevertheless, I say this, I hope the prohibition question gets settled before the entire stand of the Christian Church on social questions is otherwise stultified and nullified. I have cast my last vote for glorified red-caps of special privilege, for the bell-hops of utility companies, simply because they are dry. I believe there are at least two questions before Americans to-day of greater urgency than prohibition. One of them is peace, the other is the industrial question. I am going to register my convictions on those questions and not allow them to be subordinated for a generation at the request of the Anti-Saloon League or any other agency.

But if instead of mouthing the word we speak in the accents of Christ, I think this a great day for the preaching of his message.

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